

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

# *Horizon*

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

---

THE WALDORF CONFERENCE BY DWIGHT MACDONALD

THE CHANCES OF THE FUTURE BY CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS

TOTENTANZ BY ANGUS WILSON

RECOLLECTIONS OF LÉON-PAUL FARGUE BY ALLANAH HARPER

THE TOPOGRAPHICAL ILLUSION BY KATHLEEN NOTT

POEMS BY JOSÉ GARCIA VILLA

REVIEWS BY PHILIP TOYNBEE AND PATRIC DICKINSON

---

VOL. XIX

113

MCMXLIX

MAY

MONTHLY 2s. 6d.

# Man's Quest for Significance

LEWIS WAY

'Brilliant analysis of modern democracy. His book is so well written and so interesting that one positively has the excitement of wondering what comes next.'—*Listener*.

'The thesis is built up step by step with inexorable logic and consummate scholarship.'—  
DR. E. B. STRAUSS. 12s. 6d. net

ALLEN & UNWIN

*An*  
*Illustrated Catalogue*  
OF ORIGINAL LETTERS  
MANUSCRIPT PAPERS  
AND BOOKS OF  
FREDERICK ROLFE  
(*Baron Corvo*)

*Published in a limited edition*  
*Price one shilling, post free*

GEORGE FREDERICK SIMS  
2 Treve Avenue, Harrow  
Middlesex  
Byron 2463

## HESTER W. CHAPMAN GREAT VILLIERS

Miss Chapman's fascinating full-length study of the 2nd Duke of Buckingham (the 'B' of the famous Cabal Ministry and the Zimri of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*) incorporates material, from the Duke's Commonplace Book, never before made available to historians.

19 May

Fully illustrated

18s.

## W. H. GARDNER GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

The long awaited second volume of Dr. Gardner's great critical study will be published on 12 May.

30s.

SECKER & WARBURG



# *Welcome the Spring*

with a Six Months' Subscription to

## ***Horizon***

for yourself or for your friends

*Sixteen Shillings for Six Months, £1 12s. for a Year*  
(U.S.A. and Canada \$7.50)

POST FREE ANYWHERE

To HORIZON, 53 Bedford Square, W.C.1

I enclose £..... for which please send HORIZON to:

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

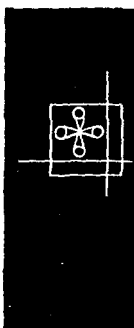
.....

SENDER'S NAME.....

AND ADDRESS.....

.....

NOTE: Please enclose a Greeting Card with the  
this personal note from me first issue sent.



1949

- |  |    |  |
|--|----|--|
| HUNTINGTON CAIRNS, Editor                                      | 12 | <i>THE LIMITS OF ART</i><br>An anthology 1450 pages, \$6.50  |
| JAMES H. BREASTED, Jr.   | 13 | <i>EGYPTIAN SERVANT STATUES</i><br>99 plates \$7.50  |
| EDITH PORADA, Editor,<br>in collaboration with BRIGGS BUCHANAN | 14 | <i>THE CORPUS OF ANCIENT<br/>NEAR EASTERN SEALS IN<br/>NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTIONS</i><br>Preface by Professor Albrecht Goetze<br>176 plates, 2 volumes \$15.00 |
| ST. JOHN PERSE   | 15 | <i>EXILE AND OTHER POEMS</i><br>Translated by Denis Devlin \$5.00  |
| BLACKMUR, CROCE, PEYRE,<br>RANSOM, READ, TATE                  | 16 | <i>LECTURES IN CRITICISM</i><br>Delivered at the Johns Hopkins<br>Symposium \$3.50   |
| JOSEPH CAMPBELL  | 17 | <i>THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND<br/>FACES</i> Illustrated, \$4.00  |
| GLADYS A. REICHARD   | 18 | <i>NAVAHO RELIGION:</i><br>A Study of Symbolism \$5.50   |

### BOLLINGEN SERIES

Distributed by PANTHEON BOOKS, INC.  
41 WASHINGTON SQUARE, NEW YORK 12

# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

Vol. XIX No. 113 May 1949

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMMENT	305
SEVEN POEMS	<i>José Garcia Villa</i> 307
THE WALDORF CONFERENCE	<i>Dwight Macdonald</i> 313
THE CHANCES OF THE FUTURE	<i>Christopher Hollis</i> 327
TOTENTANZ	<i>Angus Wilson</i> 337
RECOLLECTIONS OF LÉON-PAUL FARGUE	<i>Allanah Harper</i> 354
THE TOPOGRAPHICAL ILLUSION	<i>Kathleen Nott</i> 367
SELECTED NOTICES:	
THE WRONG SET	<i>Philip Toynbee</i> 372
<i>Angus Wilson</i>	
THE VOYAGE OF MAGELLAN	
<i>Laurie Lee</i>	
SELECTED POEMS	
<i>John Crowe Ransom</i>	
POEMS 1920-45	
<i>Allen Tate</i>	
THE DISPOSSESSED	<i>Patric Dickinson</i> 374
<i>John Berryman</i>	
THE KING OF ASINE	
<i>George Seferis</i>	
THE AGE OF ANXIETY	
<i>W. H. Auden</i>	

The Offices of HORIZON are at 53 Bedford Square, W.C.1. MUS: 3926.—  
Annual Subscription 32s. net, including postage; 6 months 16s.; U.S.A. and Canada:  
\$7.50 a year, single copies 75c. Agents for U.S.A.: Gotham Book Mart, 41 West  
47th Street, New York City; Canada: Book Center, 4629 Park Avenue, Montreal 8;  
Norway: Narvesens Kioskkompani, Stortingsgata 2, Oslo.

All MSS. submitted should be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope, and will not  
otherwise be returned.

# FABER POETRY

by **W. H. AUDEN**

Poems, Look, Stranger, The Orators,  
The Dance of Death, Another  
Time, New Year Letter, For the  
Time Being, The Age of Anxiety.

with **Christopher Isherwood**

The Dog Beneath the Skin, The  
Ascent of F6, On the Frontier.

with **Louis MacNeice**

Letters from Iceland.

by **GEORGE BARKER**

Poems, Calamiterror, Lament and  
Triumph, Eros in Dogma.

by **RUPERT BROOKE**

Collected Poems.

by **ROY CAMPBELL**

Adamastor, Talking Bronco.

by **IDRIS DAVIES**

The Angry Summer, Tonypandy.

by **WALTER DE LA MARE**

Collected Poems, Collected Rhymes  
and Verses, Bells and Grass, Pea-  
cock Pie, Songs of Childhood, Stuff  
and Nonsense, The Listeners and  
other poems, The Burning-Glass  
and other poems, The Traveller.

by **RONALD DUNCAN**

This Way to the Tomb.

by **LAWRENCE DURRELL**

A Private Country, Cities, Plains and  
People, On Seeming to Presume.

by **T. S. ELIOT**

Collected Poems 1909-1935, Four  
Quartets, Murder in the Cathed-  
ral, The Family Reunion.

by **WILLIAM EMPSON**

The Gathering Storm.

by **GEOFFREY FABER**

The Buried Stream: Collected  
Poems.

by **W. S. GRAHAM**

The White Threshold.

by **R. GREACEN and**

**V. IREMONGER**

Contemporary Irish Poetry.

by **SEAN JENNETT**

Always Adam, The Cloth of Flesh.

by **MAURICE LINDSAY**

Modern Scottish Poetry.

by **DONAGH MACDONAGH**

The Hungry Grass.

by **LOUIS MACNEICE**

Poems, The Earth Compels, Plant  
and Phantom, Autumn Journal,  
Springboard, Out of the Picture,  
Christopher Columbus, The Dark  
Tower, Holes in the Sky.

by **EDWIN MUIR**

The Narrow Place, The Voyage.

by **NORMAN NICHOLSON**

Five Rivers, The Old Man of the  
Mountains, Rock Face.

by **EZRA POUND**

Selected Poems.

by **HERBERT READ**

The End of a War, A World  
Within a War, Collected Poems.

by **KEIDRYCH RHYS**

Modern Welsh Poetry (Anthology).

by **ANNE RIDLER**

The Nine Bright Shiners, A Little  
Book of Modern Verse (Antho-  
logy), The Shadow Factory.

by **LYNETTE ROBERTS**

Poems.

by **MICHAEL ROBERTS**

Orion Marches, Faber Book of  
Modern Verse, Faber Book of  
Comic Verse.

by **A. L. ROWSE**

Poems of a Decade, Poems Chiefly  
Cornish, Poems of Deliverance.

by **SIEGFRIED SASSOON**

Collected Poems.

by **STEPHEN SPENDER**

Trial of a Judge, Poems, The Still  
Centre, Ruins and Visions, Poems  
of Dedication.

by **HENRY TREECE**

Invitation and Warning, The Black  
Seasons, The Haunted Garden.

by **VERNON WATKINS**

The Ballad of the Mari Lwyd,  
The Lamp and the Veil.

# COMMENT

THIS month we open with a description of the Congress in New York to which the British delegates, headed by Professor Bernal, were refused visas. Unlike Wroclaw, this conference has received no publicity in England, and we print a report in full to give a picture, once and for all, of the proceedings at this kind of thing in case some of our readers and authors who receive invitations to attend them wish to know the form. Dwight Macdonald, editor of *Politics*, is a representative of the non-Communist extreme left. Christopher Hollis, whose article follows, is the Roman Catholic Tory M.P. for Devizes. A certain similarity in their point of view reveals the extent to which Communist policy is uniting Western thought by causing all those who make a study of the Ends *v.* Means fallacies of Marxism to contribute an alternative doctrine which invariably is based on a positive restatement of spiritual values and of the rights of man. To take our own example. The attacks on HORIZON from Communist sources always picture us as reactionary, decadent, lost elements who have no contact with the working class and whose extinction is a matter of minutes. These attacks are usually launched in a breezy, hearty manner, whether they proceed from *Pravda* or the English fellow-stragglers. There is a special voice for talking to decadents whether you address them as a Communist or a Fascist, as a key-jingling Conservative business man or a pipe-smoking Socialist planner, and it always makes the decadent feel thoroughly guilty. Suppose these people are right and that the only salvation for the artist lies in his representation of the problem of the working class? 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray.' Then where are the productions of those who have not gone astray and which we should take as a model? So far as we know they don't exist, or, if they do, our deviation has so intoxicated us that we don't even like them. We are driven on to the ultimate conclusion that 'decadence' is the only living force in the arts today, and that if the whole world were to go Communist tomorrow, despite all the commissars in the universe, it would cry out for 'decadent' modern art. The workers are just as tired and bored with themselves as anybody else, and, wherever they have a chance to exhibit their art and not what they are told ought to

be their art, it appears more 'decadent' than bourgeois art because its neurotic quality is not enriched by competent technique. How many times have we 'decadents' not quailed before the roar of our political sergeant-majors only to find they have a rejected poem in their pocket? So when we are attacked as 'decadent' we should go forward, confident that we are on the right track. 'Decadent', 'Reactionary', 'Morbid', 'Subversive', 'Unintelligible'. All these words applied to artists mean: 'You are getting warm, you are getting dangerous, you are approaching that ever-flowing fountain of passion, incandescent with intelligence, at the centre of the maze—the soul of man'.

In this number we publish a new story by Angus Wilson in which he enriches his decadence by a certain fantasy not found in the others (note the manly title) and which belongs completely to our time—and also a study of Léon-Paul Fargue, one of the least known of modern French writers, but one of the most poetical—in that he led a poetical life. And the poetical life is the true opposite of the totalitarian one. With an absolute love of beauty, a horror of cruelty, an utter devotion to the idea of freedom in ourselves and others, with a certain impatience with the crossword puzzles and double acrostics with which man, the two-legged tragedy, occupies his brief residence in the condemned cell, we can become thinking aesthetes like night-walking Fargue, who, although he did not produce very much art, lived in a state of aesthetic grace, always ready to receive inspiration. The fate of so many English writers is that, with the best will in the world and most of the talent, they gradually drift into a congenial way of living, regulated by good taste and professional respect, which extinguishes the spark that, in lives shorter and less well-spent, may never have gone out.



JOSÉ GARCIA VILLA

## SEVEN POEMS

### A NOTE ON THE COMMAS

THE reader of the following poems may be perplexed and puzzled at my use of the comma: it is a new, special and *poetic* use to which I have put it. The commas appear in the poems *functionally*, and thus not for eccentricity; and they are there also *poetically*, that is to say, not in their prose function. These poems were conceived *with* commas, as 'comma poems', in which the commas are an integral and essential part of the medium: regulating the poem's verbal density and time movement: enabling each word to attain a fuller tonal value, and the line movement to become more measured. The method may be compared to Seurat's architectonic and measured pointillism—where the points of colour *are* themselves the medium of expression, and therefore functional and valid, as medium of art and as medium of personality. Only the uninitiate would complain that Seurat should have painted in strokes.

Regarding the time movement effected by the commas—a pause ensues after each comma, but a pause not as long as that commanded by its prose use: for this reason the usual space after the comma is omitted. The result is a lineal pace of quiet dignity and movement.

I realize of course that this poetic employment of the comma is an innovation which may disconcert some readers: for them I can only say that they can *still* read the poems by ignoring the commas if they find these in the way; personally I find that they even add visual distinction. With the more poetically and texturally sensitive reader, I believe that he will see with me the essentiality of the commas: the best test, which I have myself employed, is to copy out a poem *omitting* the commas and then to read this text comparatively with the comma'ed version: the loss is distinctly and immediately cognizable. Therein lies the justification for this—true enough—strange innovation.

J. G. V.

## HORIZON

## I

The, bright, Centipede,  
 Begins, his, stampede !  
 O, celestial, Engine, from,  
 What, celestial, province !  
 His, spiritual, might,  
 Golding, the, night—  
 His, spiritual, eyes,  
 Foretelling, my, Size ;  
 His, spiritual, feet,  
 Stamping, in, heat,  
 The, radium, brain,  
 To, Spiritual, Imagination.

## II

Much, beauty, is, less, than, the, face, of,  
 My, dark, hero. His, under, is, pure,  
 Lightning. His, under, is, the, socket,  
  
 Of, the, sun. Not, Christ, the, Fox, not,  
 Christ, the, Lord, His, beauty, is, too,  
 Sly, too, meek. But, Christ, Oppositor,  
  
 Christ, Foeman : The, true, dark, Hero.  
 He with, the, three-eyéd, thunders, he,  
 With, the, rigorous, terrors : this,  
  
 Man's, under, is, pure, lightning. This,  
 Man's, under, is, the, socket, of, the,  
 Sun. After, pure, eyes, have, peeled,  
  
 Off, skin, who, can, gaze, unburned ? Who,  
 Can, stand, unbowed ? Well, be, perceived,  
 And, well, perceive. Receive, be, received.

## III

When, I, was, no, bigger, than, a, huge,  
 Star, in, my, self, I, began, to, write,  
 My,  
 Theology,  
 Of, rose, and,

Tiger : till, I, burned, with, their,  
 Pure, and, Rage. Then, was, I, Wrath-  
     Ful,  
     And, most,  
 Gentle : most,

Dark, and, yet, most, Lit : in, me, an,  
 Eye, there, grew : springing, Vision,  
     Its,  
     Gold, and,  
     Its, wars. Then,

I, knew, the, Lord, was, not, my, Creator !  
 —Not, He, the, Unbegotten—but, I, saw,  
     The,  
     Creator,  
 Was, I—and,

I, began, to, Die, and, I, began, to, Grow.

## IV

My, whoseness, is, to, me, what, I,  
     Am, to, the, Holy,  
     Unghost—  
 It, moveth, me;  
     As, it,

Progresses, me, to, unnight, noon,  
     Day. Project,  
     Me, Unghost !  
 Project, me,  
     Elect,

Me, to, thy, knighthood, to, that,  
     Stern, height.  
     Knight, and,  
 Unnight,  
     Me. In,

## HORIZON

Strictest, supervision, knit, me :  
 To, the, Gibralt,  
 Rock : to, the,  
 Radium, rock,  
 Of, I !

To, the, Gibralt, rock : to, the,  
 Radium, rock, of,  
 I. O, halt,  
 And, halter,  
 Me. Lead,

And, perish, me ! Erect, me, to, where,  
 All, eyesights,  
 Break—  
 Let, all, eye—  
 Sights, break !

## V

Clean, like, iodoform, between, the, tall,  
 Letters, of, *Death*, I, see, Life. This,  
 To, me, is, immortal, weather, immortal,

Spelling : The, elegant, interweaver, I,  
 Call, Hero. Beautiful, as, a, child, eating,  
 Raw, carrots : whole, as, a, child's, eyes,

Gazing, at, you : Death, builds, her, heroes,  
 Intensely, clean, Death, builds, her, heroes,  
 Intensely, whole. A, man, and, Death, indeed,

That, Life, may, speak : a, man, and, Death,  
 In, league, that, Life, may, flower : clean,  
 Athletic, mathematic, dancer : and, present-

Tensing, all, his, future : poises, dances,  
 Every, everywhere, he, go : Christ, upon, a,  
 Ball : Saltimbanque, perpetual, in, beauty.

## VI

More,miracled,and,  
 Gazing,from,new,light-  
 Nings: from,blázerock, stérnrock,  
 I: journeyer,yet,I,go:  
     My,  
     Jacob,warlock,seek.  
     Footed,on,lightning,  
 Hobnail,in,fire: spy,from,my,Darien,  
     That,Who,that,When.  
     Whence,  
     I,derive: whence,is,  
     My,eye,anarch,and,love.  
 Then,come,Thou,must,O,Killer,Christ!  
     O,Killer,Christ,Thy,  
     Forepaw,  
     Sweet: in,dazelock,  
     Meet,my,Living,Arm:  
 Wrest,for,the,prize,of,Who,is,Who.  
     Well,Thee,I'll,lock!  
     Thy,  
     Rigid,blood,factor,  
     Thaw,Phosphor,to,Fire:  
 That,if,Thou,arise,Antarctic,Christ,  
     Yet,art,Thou,Glown,  
     To,  
     Heaving,Light. If,I,  
     Arise: Thou'rt,knelled,  
 Kneeled,to,O,succoured,from,mарble,  
     Life,by,cavalier,Prometheus,  
     Love.

## VII

A,living,giant,all,in,little,pieces,  
 Out,of,death's,kingdom,into,shine—  
 My,dark,hero,out,of,death's,answers,  
 My,deep,hero,out,of,death's,mirrors:  
 My,living,brilliant,my,living,garnet.



He,dazzles,me,with,all,death's,emeralds !  
He,death's,scholar,victor,flower :  
All,death's,treasures,all,death's,manuscripts,  
All,death's,jewels,from,all,her,lives,  
Locked,in,a,look,of,his,eyes—

He,seizeth,me,he,sizeth,me,he,driveth,me,  
Out,of,my,kingdom,into,shine—  
He,seizeth,me,he,driveth,me,he,raceth,me,  
To,the,wild,and,gold,direction,  
To,the,great,and,gold,destruction—

He,grazes,me,he,raceth,me,he,dazeth,me,  
To,the,great,and,gold,answers,  
To,the,bright,and,final,answers :  
He,holdeth,me,he,goldeth,me,he,foldeth,me,  
To,Living,Primogenite,Verb-living,Garnet.

# DWIGHT MACDONALD

## THE WALDORF CONFERENCE

ON 26 and 27 March, the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, held a 'Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace' at the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. The Conference had little to do with either culture, science or peace, but it was nevertheless of great significance. It was strictly a Stalinoid affair: the N.C.A.S.P. is a Communist-front organization shepherded by the reliable Hannah Dorner, and the Conference itself excluded from the speakers' platform all known anti-Communists, no matter how capable or eminent (except for Norman Cousins). There was room on the writing panel for Shirley Graham but not for John Dos Passos; there was room on the Natural Science panel for an electronic engineer named W. A. Higinbotham but not for Herman J. Muller, the Nobel prize-winner who had protested about the Lysenko scandal; there was room on the Religion panel for the retired Bishop of Utah and the retired Bishop of Honolulu, but not for Reinhold Niebuhr, John Haynes Holmes or A. J. Muste. The 'call' to the Conference followed the same lines: it denounced at length the State Department's 'cold war' policy but had not one word criticizing the Russian power-moves to which this policy is a reaction. Finally, all the old familiar Stalinoid names were prominent throughout the Conference: from Professor Harlow Shapley, the chairman, and Professor Frederick L. Schuman, the keynote speaker, to Howard Fast, Paul Sweezy, T. O. Thackrey, I. F. Stone, Victor Bernstein, F. O. Matthiessen, Richard O. Boyer, Agnes Smedley, Aaron Copland, Clifford Odets, and Guy Emerson Sipler. When you get all these gathered together, plus some political illiterates and minus every known opponent of the Communists, then the conclusion is reasonable that the Conference is a front operation of the C.P.

COMRADE V. TOVARICH

I attended, as a delegate, as many of the sessions as I could, and I know from my own observation that the above conclusion is not

only reasonable but also true. The Waldorf Conference was the lineal descendant of last fall's conference at Wroclaw, Poland; and it will itself have issue in the World Congress of Partisans which is soon going to be held in Paris. It was also the first big action our own Stalinoids have taken since the debacle of the Wallace presidential campaign. (Wallace, of course, spoke several times at the Conference, but it was amusing to see how he was kept out of the spotlight; he was, after all, a kind of *memento mori*, a skeleton at the feast.)

The Waldorf Conference showed one thing very clearly: the Communists are on the defensive, in this country at least. The most politically revealing episode took place at the final plenary session on Sunday afternoon. Professor Schuman gave the keynote speech: it was a middle-of-the-road, both-sides-are-guilty speech; he pictured *both* the Kremlin and the State Department as neurotic and even a little psychotic, and he found that America's 'war disease' had its counterpart 'among the leaders and peoples of Eastern Europe'. (Professor Shapley, in opening the Conference, had taken the same line.) His speech was applauded mildly by the 3,000 assembled delegates (whom he had shushed when they booed Churchill's name). Presently, the chief Russian delegate, A. A. Fadayev, gave his speech. At the end he said: 'I must say that I found certain aspects of Professor Schuman's speech astonishing. He indicated that he believes there are elements in the Soviet Union to some extent responsible for the menace to the peace, just as there are such elements in the United States. . . . Professor Schuman is mistaken. There are no such elements in our country.' Mr. Fadayev was also unkind enough to add that Professor Schuman had once reviewed favourably the party-line classic on foreign policy, *The Great Conspiracy* by Kahn and Sayers; yet 'this book stated most emphatically that these elements were not in our country and that some of them *were* in the United States'. The clash between Russian intransigence and American appeasement thus came out sharply—and, judging by the thunderous applause which Fadayev's remarks got, the rank and file in the audience were on the Russian side. Professor Schuman, later, took the floor again. 'I am delighted', he said, looking depressed, 'to agree with Mr. Fadayev's statement that there are no elements in the U.S.S.R. which desire war with the U.S.A. I agree entirely with this. I also agree that there *are* elements in the U.S.A. which

desire war with the U.S.S.R.' Thus Professor Schuman, not for the first time (see Frank Trager's article on him in *Partisan Review*, March-April 1940), bowed to superior force, and hypocritically agreed with a formulation he had himself attacked just an hour before. It was a shabby spectacle.

But if the Russian carried his point then, the victory was short lived. At the close of the session, an extremely vague and innocuous resolution about world peace was presented from the platform, one which I myself could sign. Several delegates objected from the floor: they wanted 'something with teeth in it', i.e., something which backed Russian world policy and attacked American policy. (Judging by their reactions throughout the meetings, I would say that the great majority of the delegates were ardent Russia-firsters; only the Russian delegates, whom they cheered by far the loudest, gave them the fighting pro-Russian and anti-American line they wanted; the American leaders of the Conference took a very cautious, critical-of-both-sides line.) These rank-and-file objections were successfully met when Shapley recognized, also from the floor delegates, first Howard Fast and then the very Albert E. Kahn who had written *The Great Conspiracy*. These veteran Communist whips persuaded the assembled delegates *not* to insist on a more militant resolution! It was, all in all, a richly confusing session which brought to a head the conflict visible all through the Conference between the American leaders, who favoured a 'soft' or 'popular front' policy, and the American ranks plus the Russian delegates, who favoured a 'hard' or 'third period' policy. This split, as yet just potential, may become serious. There is, for example, a surprising number of small groups of ex-party members who have been expelled for 'Trotskyism' (i.e., ultra-leftism) recently, but who still regard themselves as loyal Communists and who criticize the present leadership as 'Browderite liquidators'.

#### THE ANTI-COMMUNIST LEFT TAKES THE OFFENSIVE

The placatory line taken by the Conference leaders—contrasting even with the original Call, which took the unilateral approach favoured by the Russians and the ranks of the delegates—may also have been due to the fact that we of the anti-Communist left, really went into action to expose the Conference for the C.P. front it was. After various preliminary meetings—I'm proud to say that the first was held in my own apartment—a small group crystallized,

B

led by Sidney Hook, with two aims: to keep up a running barrage in the press, and to get up a counter-meeting at Freedom House on Saturday afternoon. The immediate cause, or stimulus, of the whole action was the refusal of the Shapley group to permit Dr. Hook to read before one of the panels a paper criticizing the notion of class or national truths in science as leading to war, and arguing in favour of a concept of scientific truth as international in character. When the Conference, despite its alleged interest in culture, science and peace, refused even to hear this viewpoint, Dr. Hook, a man of considerable energy and bellicosity, took the lead in organizing an *ad hoc* group: Americans for Intellectual Freedom. In its brief week of existence, the A.I.F., operating from two rooms in the Waldorf, spent about \$2,000 (half from trade unions, half from individuals), gave the press so much usable copy that A.I.F. threatened to blanket the Waldorf Conference in the news, and staged a very successful meeting at Freedom House, which was addressed by Drs. Counts, Hook and Muller, by George Biddle and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., by Bertram J. Wolfe and A. J. Muste,<sup>1</sup> by Madame Kosenkina, and many others, and which filled every one of the 450 seats available inside Freedom House, and drew an overflow crowd, listening to the loudspeakers in Bryant Park, of several thousand. The A.I.F. action, devotedly staffed by Arnold Beichman, Pearl Kluger, and Mel Pitzele, assisted by dozens of part-time volunteers who fell all over each other's feet and yet somehow got things done, was an inspiring instance of how much can be accomplished if people really feel excited about a cause. Its chief importance was that it showed up the absurdity of the claim of the Waldorf Conference to represent all, or even a major part, of American culture today.

An even more modest action also produced some interesting results. Three or four of us decided to apply for delegates' cards; we got them, on payment of the \$3 fee, with no trouble, and we attended the Writing and Publishing panel. This session, which turned out to be very dramatic, is worth describing in detail.

<sup>1</sup> Muste spoke for Peacemakers, the left-wing pacifist group to which both he and I belong. He asked for a place also on the Waldorf Conference programme, but, although they had two whole days with all kinds of different panels as against A.I.F.'s single meeting, they could not find five minutes for a pacifist voice. I hope A. J. Muste, and my fellow-pacifists, will draw some political conclusions from this contrast.



## OLD SHEEP AT NEW GATES

About eight hundred delegates packed the Starlight Roof for the Writing and Publishing panel on 26 March. Our Dissenting group took the precaution of getting there very early and securing strategically placed seats. The panel speakers sat behind a long, cloth-covered counter facing the delegates. They included Agnes Smedley, W. E. B. DuBois, Richard O. Boyer, Howard Fast, Norman Mailer, Ira Wolfert, F. O. Matthiessen. Right in front of me, not ten feet away, sat the Russian delegates: P. A. Pavlenko, Stalin Prize novelist; A. A. Fadayeve, secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers and No. 1 literary bureaucrat; Dimitri Shostakovich, the composer. The contrast between the two last (Pavlenko was a nonentity and looked the part) was extreme. Shostakovich was pale, slight, sensitive-looking; he sat hunched over, his hand covering his mouth or shading his eyes; he looked tense, withdrawn, unsmiling—a tragic and heart-rending figure. Fadayeve was a big, bulky, square-shouldered man, with a ruddy, fleshy, big-jawed face and iron-grey hair; his expression was cold and wooden; he looked more like a plain-clothes detective than a writer.

Louis Untermeyer chaired the meeting, on the whole quite fairly, and with wit and presence of mind (he needed both). In his opening remarks, he ingratiated himself with the audience (which was about ninety-five per cent Stalinoid, judging from its reactions) with a reference to 'a dirty, four-letter word, Hook'. Robert Lowell: 'I object'. Untermeyer: 'What is your objection, Mr. Lowell?' Lowell: 'Hook is not a dirty word'. Untermeyer: 'All right, let's just say a four-letter word. . . .' This was the first, and almost the last, comfort the comrades got from the chairman. (He was a literary man, after all, and about the only discernible literary people in the audience were all Dissenters, the rest being U.O.P.W.A organizers, high school teachers, and public-relations workers, etc.)

Three panel members opened the meeting with longish speeches. Boyer talked about the Communist Party as the only defender of freedom of thought and individual conscience. Matthiessen, Professor of English at Harvard, talked about Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and Melville as the Henry Wallaces of their day (high point was the reference to Captain Ahab as a 'common man'), and praised Emerson's dedication to 'the

organizing of liberty' as pretty good considering that Lenin hadn't yet come along to show us how to do the job right. Fast wound up the preliminaries with a bold statement in favour of peace and against those who 'want peace to fail'.

The floor was then thrown open to the delegates and the other panel speakers (three minutes apiece). I got up and got the floor without difficulty. There was some commotion, firmly quelled by Chairman Untermeyer, when I gave my name and mentioned *Politics*. The gist of my speech follows (like all other quotes here, I believe this to be accurate in substance though perhaps not always word for word):

'I don't want peace to fail; in fact, I'm a pacifist. But I want to know how it serves peace and culture to accept as the spokesman for Russian literature a man who is primarily not a writer but a State functionary. As secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, Mr. Fadayevev represents precisely that exploitation of culture by the war-making State which it is the alleged purpose of this Conference to protest against. Why didn't Russia send, instead of an official with no literary standing, one of her internationally known writers—some one like Boris Pasternak, Isaac Babel, Ivan Katayev, Anna Akhmetova, Michael Zostchenko, or Boris Pilnyak?

'I want to ask Mr. Fadayevev three questions:

'(1) What has happened to the above six writers? Are they alive? Are they free or in prison?

'(2) In 1945, Mr. Fadayevev published a novel, *Young Guard*. In 1948 the Government denounced it as politically incorrect. Mr. Fadayevev at once agreed to rewrite the entire book "attentively and lovingly". Is this his idea of proper behaviour for a writer?

'(3) At the Wroclaw Congress, last fall, Mr. Fadayevev attacked American culture in these terms: "Patented religions; standardized literary ideals, theatre and moving pictures; sport jargon; endless novels; and street songs all beginning with Christian doctrine and ending with shivering American swing—this modern St. Vitus dance is absolutely all we now get from America. . . . In the United States, the expression of any thought which might be regarded as dangerous, will be punished with ten years in prison, a fine of \$10,000 and deprivation of American citizenship." How does this sort of thing advance world peace? And does Mr. Fadayevev expect the 3,000 delegates to this Conference to all be arrested and fined \$10,000 on Monday?'

Chairman Untermeyer: 'Mr. Fadayev, do you want to answer?' Fadayev (after a huddle with his translator): 'Yes.' Presently, he strode to the microphone and spoke in Russian, forcefully and with angry gestures, his flushed face thrust forward aggressively. His reply, as translated, was essentially as follows:

'(1) These people are still in existence. Pasternak has the *dacha* next to mine in the country and is busy translating the works of Shakespeare. Zostchenko published a novel in 1947.

'(2) My questioner seems frightened because writers are criticized. But in Russia, writers don't stop writing because they are criticized. As for my novel, *Young Guard*, it is true that I am revising it. The Politburo's criticism has helped my work greatly. This criticism was not political, but was raised because my novel slighted the contribution of adults in the partisan fight against the Germans. The book has sold three million copies<sup>1</sup> and I have received 18,000 letters about it. I have been too busy to complete the revision, but the original edition is still being sold.

'(3) I did not attack American culture in general, but only those forces working against peace. I must also say that I can talk about American literature because I have read it and know it better than my questioner knows Russian literature. This is because in Russia we have many translations of American writers, while the writers my questioner mentions are not available in translation in America.<sup>2</sup>

'Finally, the point of view of my questioner is familiar: it is that of an enemy of the Soviet Union. It is the viewpoint of an old sheep taken to a new gate.'

<sup>1</sup> Top figure hitherto reported: one million. Mr. Fadayev is at least this much of an author: he exaggerates the sales of his books.

<sup>2</sup> The N.Y. Public Library has the following English translations of books by the six writers in question: AKHMETOVA: '*Forty-Seven Love Poems*' (J. Cape, London, 1927); BABEL: *Benia Krik, a Film Novel* (Collet, London, 1935) (not there, but in my own library is *Red Cavalry*—Knopf, 1929); KATAYEV: *The Embezzlers* (MacVeagh, 1929), *Time, Forward* (Farrar & Rinehart, 1933), *Squaring the Circle* (Wishart, London, 1934), *We Carry On* (Moscow, 1942), *The Wife* (Hutchinson, 1946); PASTERNAK: *Collected Prose* (Drummond, London, 1945), *Selected Poems* (New Directions annual, 1946); PILNYAK: *Tales of the Wilderness* (Knopf, 1925), *The Naked Year* (Payson & Clarke, 1928), *The Volga Falls to the Caspian Sea* (Cosmopolitan, 1931); ZOSTCHENKO: *Four Sketches* (Nazaroff, Paris, 1922), *Russia Laughs* (Lothrop, Lee & Shephard, Boston, 1935), *Dawn of the New Day* (Moscow, 1939).

## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE—AND TANGARINES

Mary McCarthy, author of *The Company She Keeps* and *The Oasis*, next got the floor: 'I want to ask Mr. Matthiessen two questions:

'(1) Does he think Mr. Fadayev answered Mr. Macdonald's questions satisfactorily?

'(2) How does he conceive that Emerson would go about "organizing liberty" in the Soviet Union today, and does he think Thoreau could practice civil disobedience there?' Matthiessen: 'I don't know the whole background from which the questions and the answers came, but I would say that Mr. Fadayev met the questions directly, in fact head-on.<sup>1</sup> As for the second question, we must always take into account the historical factor. Society in the early nineteenth century had an anarchistic and protestant colouration. Today, society is more collective. I can't say that I think that Emerson and Thoreau could exist in the Soviet Union today, but neither do I think Lenin could exist in the United States today.' (This last is hereby nominated for Non-Sequitur-of-the-Year.)

Following this exchange, Delegate Pavlenko's translator read a very long speech about the democratic traditions of Russian literature and the ditto of 'the progressive literature of America', with special reference to Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair—both of whom, as he did not mention and most likely didn't know, have

<sup>1</sup> True enough, in the sense that he collided violently with them. It is unfortunate that Prof. Matthiessen was not familiar with 'the whole background', or indeed with the foreground, and that his political passions so got the better of his scholarly discretion that he expressed an opinion anyway. It is also unfortunate, especially for Dr. Matthiessen, that Chairman Untermeyer refused me the floor to expose briefly the lies and half-truths in Mr. Fadayev's answer. Thus he mentioned only two of the six writers I asked about, and even there (a) it has long been known over here that Pasternak has been forced to give up poetry for the safer job of translating, but this, of course, is just the point; (b) Zostchenko was purged by Zhdanov in August 1947, so it proves nothing to say he published something 'in 1947'. Thus the slighting of adults in *Young Guard* was objected to on political grounds, since this meant slighting the role of Stalin and the Communists in the war and emphasizing the spontaneous resistance of the youth and common people (see *Politics*, Spring 1948, p. 112 for details on the *Young Guard* case); also, Fadayev may not have finished revising his novel, but he and Shostakovich *did* collaborate on a movie from it which conformed to the Politburo's 'suggestions'. And thus he lied about his Wroclaw speech, which was a virulent attack on American culture *as a whole*.

recently condemned both the Wroclaw Congress and the Kremlin's cultural policy. He hymned at length Soviet writers ('Did they preach hatred toward mankind and international discord? [*breathless pause*] No, they did not!') and composers ('No Russian composer ever was or could be the spokesman of the knife and bomb'). He quoted, as required by statute, the epigram of 'the leader of the Soviet people, J. V. Stalin' that 'writers are the engineers of the human soul'. He described at length how the inhabitants of his home town—Yalta, of all places—are fruitfully engaged in planting orange, lemon and tangerine trees, and manfully confessed: 'I have come here without having fulfilled my obligation. I have promised to plant twenty tangerine trees and two lemon trees in the garden of my home.' [*Stormy applause.*] When the translator, after some fifteen minutes of this kind of thing, said he would have to skip a few pages because of time limitations (each delegate was supposed to get only three minutes), protests arose everywhere. *This* was what they had come to hear, these heartwarming generalities were what the audience wanted. Indeed, Pavlenko's speech was evidently designed to set the keynote for the afternoon, an effect that was quite spoiled by the sour notes from the Dissenters.

As soon as the translator had finished, Robert Lowell, author of *Lord Weary's Castle*, got the floor: 'I am a poet and a Roman Catholic. [*Sensation—mob noises offstage.*] I want to ask Mr. Pavlenko a simple question: what are the laws governing conscientious objection in the Soviet Union? And I want to ask a much more difficult and complicated question of the only person in the Russian delegation who might be able to answer it, a man to whom my heart goes out, Mr. Shostakovich. Will he answer as fully as he can this question: How has the criticism of his Government helped his own work?'

A woman delegate rose to a point of order to object that neither question was relevant in a conference devoted to peace and culture. The chairman ruled against her. Pavlenko then replied: 'I do not know the laws on conscientious objection because when my country called, I fought. I am now fifty, and I hope to be still able to fight for my country when I am a hundred.' [*Stormy applause.*]

Shostakovich was made obviously unhappy by the question (unlike Fadayev, who had responded with polemical ardour to



my questions). Nervously (his hands were literally trembling) he spoke a few words, in a thin voice, into the microphone. These were translated: 'Our musical criticism is a reflection of our life. The criticism brings me much good because it helps bring my music forward.' This minimum formula was all he could say of his own accord; the next morning, in the same room, at the music panel, he gave a long speech full of passionate defence of Soviet cultural policy and violent attack on 'modernistic' and 'formalistic' composers. It seems likely that his reply to Lowell was all he could say spontaneously, in his own person, and that his next morning's speech was written for him by some one else.

The Chairman then recognized Dr. George S. Counts, of Teachers College, one of the organizers of Americans for Intellectual Freedom. Dr. Counts dramatically flourished a copy of the Russian text of the Wroclaw proceedings, from which he read some further interesting statements by Comrades Fadayev and Ehrenburg. He also gave some information about cultural life in Russia, and was about to call to Comrade Pavlenko's attention Upton Sinclair's recent statement, when his time ran out. Although Pavlenko's discourse on tree-planting had run a good twenty minutes, the Chairman firmly held Counts to the three minutes allotted to all non-Russian delegates. (Mr. Untermeyer is clearly a liberal and a decent fellow, but also clearly No Hero, and only a hero could have let Counts continue in the face of the booing and the shouts of 'Sit down!')

#### THE MAILER EPISODE

Agnes Smedley then spoke, and got the biggest hand of the afternoon when she asked (*tremolo*): 'If 25,000,000 Russians had not died in the war, would we be sitting here today?' A series of delegates, hard to distinguish from each other—most were youngish, Jewish, male, and organizers of some kind, either trade union or Wallace-Progressive—made a series of little talks on the Greek guerrillas, the importance of forthcoming petitions and meetings, and other cognate subjects. Two or three (with a side glance at Delegate Lowell) wanted a resolution to be passed condemning the award of the Bollingen Prize for Poetry to the Fascist traitor, Ezra Pound, but the Chairman ruled them out of order. Evidently, the organizers of the Conference had done a slipshod job: they had made sure that only 'reliable' speakers were on the

panel (though, as we shall immediately see, even here their planning was defective) but they had not arranged for any literary people of the slightest prominence to take the floor as delegates, nor had they prepared any polemics against the Dissenters. They had evidently calculated on an idyllic rather than a dramatic work of art. Comrade Fast will certainly hear from headquarters about this.

There were still some more rude surprises in store for the comrades. Ira Wolfert, author of *An Act of Love*, complained about the iron curtain in his speech from the platform, and said that he wanted to go to Russia to see for himself but was unable to obtain a visa. This was answered from the floor by Albert E. Kahn, co-author of *The Great Conspiracy* (still the party-line bible on foreign affairs) who said that he had had no trouble in travelling freely all over Eastern Europe (though he reported no trips in Russia). But the greatest shock was the panel speech of Norman Mailer, author of *The Naked and the Dead*.

This was led up to by some remarks by Jean Malaquais, author of *The Javanese* and *World Without Visa*, a Dissenting dark-horse who spoke from the floor to criticize the lack of cultural freedom in Russia and to inquire precisely how Soviet socialism and American capitalism differed in their treatment of intellectuals. This Trotskyist thesis was received with the usual offstage murmurs. Presently Norman Mailer got up to speak. (Of the American panel speakers, Mailer seemed to be the popular favourite, just as Shostakovich among the Russians got much the biggest applause. Whenever the Chairman turned to select a new panel speaker, cries of 'Mailer' arose.)

Mailer's speech was the most moving and sincere of the afternoon: it was serious, halting, almost painfully honest; he spoke quietly and intensely, literally sweating with an effort that was spiritual rather than rhetorical: I had the impression that he was publicly stating a profound and even disagreeable (to him, as well as to his hearers) change of mind and heart. 'I must disagree somewhat with my French translator, Jean Malaquais,' he began (snickers at this ironical context—snickers which died away abruptly with the next remark), '... who is also my good friend. I think Jean Malaquais goes too far. But I must say this: I have come here as a Trojan horse. I had hesitated about coming here and speaking. I don't believe in peace conferences. They don't do

any good. So long as there is capitalism, there is going to be war. Until you have a decent, equitable socialism, you can't have peace. But you can't have socialism until the mass of workers are organized into a revolutionary party. And as I look about me here, I see few who believe in revolutions and many who believe in resolutions. . . . I am going to make myself even more unpopular. I am afraid that both the United States and the Soviet Union are moving toward state capitalism. There is no future in that. I see the peoples of *both* America and Russia—neither of them want war—caught in a mechanism which is steadily grinding on to produce war. The two systems approach each other constantly. All a writer can do is tell the truth as he sees it, and keep on writing. I am sorry to be so pessimistic, but I am a writer and not a political man.

The session was concluded by the Chairman's reading of a resolution so vague that it was passed unanimously.

#### AFTERMATH: HOW FORMIDABLE ARE THEY?

After the meeting, Mary McCarthy got involved in an argument with Howard Fast which was terminated by his inviting all the Dissenting faction to attend a reception for the foreign delegates at the Hotel Sutton, limited to members of the National Council of Arts, Sciences and Professions, the Stalinoid front which had organized the Conference. He wrote out a special pass (since none of us were either members of the N.C.A.S.P. or were willing to pay \$2 to become so), and we attended in a body. It was held in a grubby, smoky room, where various foreign delegates made speeches in their native tongues to the halting translations of which no one paid much attention, while some 150 N.C.A.S.P. members stood about awkwardly holding drinks (Scotch: 60c) in their hands. It reminded me of the Trotskyist 'social' gatherings I used to attend ten years ago: no showmanship, no fun, no dash—all very dutiful and worthy and abstract. I must confess that I got quite a different impression of the Stalinoids—at least of their New York 'cultural' periphery—than I had had from my previous experience, which was based largely on their press. Talking to them face to face, I had two main impressions. The first was that it was possible to communicate, since we had a common cultural and even (oddly enough) political background: that is, we read the same books, went to the same

art shows and foreign films, shared the same convictions in favour of the (American) underdog—the Negroes, the Jews, the economically underprivileged—and against such institutions as the Catholic hierarchy and the U.S. State Department. In contrast, I felt very little in common with the pickets who demonstrated against the Conference, who booed me as roundly as any other delegate (since their hatred was directed against all alien-appearing intellectuals) and who marched under the (to me repulsive) banners of religion and patriotism. It proved to be very easy to enter into discussion, or at least argument, with the N.C.A.S.P. members at the reception; even Howard Fast proved to be quite genial, nor did I find any trouble in giving away a half-dozen copies of the U.S.S.R. issue of *Politics*. My second impression was that these Stalinoids are much less effective and dangerous than I had expected, partly because of the above, partly because their political ideas (as in the case of the Trotskyists) are so disconnected from the rest of their lives and personal interests that it is really a duty, not a spontaneous pleasure, for them to take this political stand. The great stumbling-block, of course, is the deep sentiment in favour of the present Soviet system; this is the keystone of their faith and, indeed, of their whole ethical and mental existence; its psychological roots are so deep as to make it very hard to affect it by rational argument or documentation; yet I had the feeling that the task is by no means impossible, and that there are more inner forces working on our side than perhaps we realize.

Dissident voices were also heard at two other panels. Peter Blake attended the Planning and Building panel, where he gave an account of the purge in Soviet architecture and submitted a resolution inquiring about the fate of a number of prominent Russian architects. And Nicholas Nabokov, after Shostakovich had delivered his violently 'anti-formalist' speech at the Fine Arts session, asked him whether he agreed with the official condemnation of Hindemith, Schoenberg and Stravinsky, and whether he thought this kind of wholesale attack on modern Western music contributed to world peace. The answers were both in the affirmative.

#### A MOSCOW CONFERENCE NEXT FALL?

The U.S. State Department, after acting with intelligence and liberality in giving visas to the Russian and satellite delegates,

returned to its usual form by refusing visas to the delegates from Western Europe—except for W. O. Stapledon, billed as ‘professor’ but innocent of any academic experience. This refusal—and also the attempt at intimidation by mass picketing from the Catholic and other war veterans—was quite properly denounced by the Waldorf Conference sponsors. But the American Government *did* let in the Russians, and it *did* permit the Conference to be held, and the local police *did* protect the delegates. So let us hear no more from Messrs. Shapley, Schuman *et al.* about the mote in the eye of the State Department until they have cast out the beam from the eye of the Kremlin.

That is, until they have prevailed on the Politburo to permit, in, say, Moscow’s Hotel Lux, a similar gathering of 3,000 pro-U.S.A. Russian citizens (especially released from the labour camps to attend), which will be addressed by a seven-man American delegation chosen by Dean Acheson. Clarence Buddington Kelland would do very well, politically and esthetically, for Comrade Fadayev’s opposite number, the Komsomols could substitute for Catholic War Veterans on the picket line, and Comrades Fadayev, Shostakovich and Pavlenko can have three minutes each, from the floor, to ask awkward questions of Mr. Kelland.

I fear the Hotel Lux conference will be long in materializing. But I think we American intellectuals might seriously consider holding an international conference here next fall, to which the really significant representatives of European culture would all be invited, Communists like Eluard, Joliot-Curie, and Picasso, as well as anti-Communists like Gide, Malraux, Eliot, Auden, Sartre, Koestler, Orwell, Silone. Let us try to inveigle the Communists into discussion and debate. Such a really free and really representative conference could only be helpful to the cause of true culture, true democracy and freedom—and true peace.

[Reprinted from ‘Politics’, New York.]

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS

# THE CHANCES OF THE FUTURE

MR. BERTRAND RUSSELL in his Reith lectures has recently been giving to us his view of the shape of things to come. Though still a metaphysical pessimist, though he would still have us build upon the 'foundations of unyielding despair' concerning any ultimate meaning in things, yet he is a pragmatist optimist. He thinks that the human race will probably succeed in drawing back before the precipice of utter mutual destruction, that somehow an effective World Government will be established and that that government, even if to begin with it may be by no means as liberal as would ideally be desired, will yet be sufficiently liberal to be tolerable and at the same time sufficiently strong to prevent world war. Those instincts of destruction, aggression and competition, which were so necessary to man in his tribal days, can find a controlled and harmless satisfaction within the world state by various sublimations.

Yet Mr. Russell, if an optimist for the long-run, is by no means an optimist for the short-run. He is a bitter critic of the Soviet system. He sees no hope of a sincere partnership between the Soviet and the rest of the world. He thinks a collision between the Soviet and the rest of the world—particularly between the Soviet and America—to be not improbable. In that collision, the Soviet, he thinks, owing to its obscurantist suppression of science and other causes, will prove to be much weaker than is commonly imagined and will fairly easily be defeated. A world hegemony under the leadership of the United States will then be established, and within the framework of that system it will be possible to find the solution of the world's problems—at least in so far as to give us world peace.

Now whether there is going to be another world war or not I do not propose to argue. Most certainly it is not improbable. No sane man can fail to see the dangers of collision. Few doubt that the collision could be avoided if the free world could present in time its firm and coherent demands to the Soviet. At the same

time, the difficulty for a democratic statesman, such as President Truman, in presenting what can be represented as aggressive demands—other than as an immediate reply to a very overt act of aggression—is self-evident. Whether President Truman and the other statesmen of the West will find a way of overcoming those difficulties remains to be seen. There is probably little to be said save that peace and war are in the balance and that the balance will be tipped one way or the other by accidents, today unforeseen and unforeseeable, which will make it either just possible or just not possible to solve the international problem.

But what is surely much less grounded is Mr. Bertrand Russell's confidence that, if there is a world war, world peace will emerge out of it. The more that I meditate on this, the more improbable does it appear. It is a tale which we who are of middle age have been hearing all our lives. Mr. Russell is here only the last of a long line of preachers which stretches from Bishop Winnington Ingram onwards. Our earliest memories are of one very wicked man called Kaiser Bill. All that was needed was to hang him, and then the war that we had fought would have proved itself to be what we had so often been told that it was, 'a war to end war'. But it seems to be the general lesson of modern wars that the victors do indeed succeed in ridding the world of a great evil but only at the expense of leaving a vacuum which is before long filled by a yet greater evil. We got rid of the Kaiser, and in his place we had Hitler. We got rid of Hitler and in his place we have Stalin. Thirty-five years ago the civilized world saw in the Kaiser 'the Beast of the Apocalypse'—the tyrant and the man of blood. Today we should be amazed if we could find anywhere on the Continent of Europe a regime as mild, as liberal, as merciful or as nearly democratic as that over which he presided. So may it not well be that, after Stalin is defeated, we will look out cowering at the new masters who have taken his place and say, 'Ah, jolly old Stalin. He was not such a bad fellow after all. It is true that he murdered about fifteen million people but in comparison with those who are ruling the world today, he was at least comparatively human'? It may well be so. Modern war is not apt to lead to an increase of mercy.

'We are not greatly concerned', I imagine that Mr. Russell would argue, 'whether people at the end of this next war will be good or bad in themselves. They will not have the opportunity to



show their evil, even if they are evil. The great difference between the Second World War and the Third World War will be this. The Second World War did not leave the physical force in the world in a single hand. It left it divided between Russia and the Western world—each with its armies and its armaments. But the Third World War will be not a semi-final but a final. America and her satellites will defeat Russia and after the defeat of Russia no power will remain, strong enough to challenge the United States, even supposing it wanted to. Therefore there will be peace.'

But in real life things do not happen as simply as all that. In a football-match one side wins and the other side loses, and that is all there is to it. In a very short war that may happen in real life. The world may emerge from the war of the same pattern as it entered into it; the only change being the victory of the one Power and the defeat of the other. But this war between Russia and the United States is not likely to be a war of that sort. It is not likely to be a war of that sort because if it should turn out that the forces on one side are evidently and overwhelmingly stronger than the forces on the other, then there will not be a war at all. The challenge will not be accepted. The challenge will only be accepted if each side thinks that it has a chance of victory, and that means that the forces will be at least balanced with sufficient evenness to make the struggle a prolonged one. Now, where war differs from a game is that in a game the rules remain the same from beginning to end, but in a prolonged war the issues themselves change. The war, by its end, is being fought for different reasons than those for which it was first declared, and—Hegel is right here, at any rate—victory goes neither to the protagonist on the one side nor to the protagonist on the other, but to some 'tertius gaudens'. In the sixteenth century the Catholics demanded the total suppression of Protestantism and the Protestants demanded the total suppression of Catholicism. There followed a hundred years of bloody war between these incompatible claims, but in the end victory went neither to the one party nor to the other but to the tolerating, secular *politiques*, who argued, 'Is it not clear that neither can the Catholics suppress the Protestants, nor the Protestants suppress the Catholics, that as long as we allow these exclusive claims to be put forward on either side, we shall never have peace at all? Let us then insist on toleration and civil peace as the "summum bonum".' The result of the conflict between

Calvin and St. Ignatius Loyola was Robert Walpole, whom neither of them would have liked at all.

So I am equally confident that out of a conflict between the United States and Russia neither the United States nor Russia would emerge victorious—at least in anything like their present forms. What would emerge I do not pretend to prophesy with confidence, for it is the first lesson of experience that in such conflicts what emerges is most often the wholly unforeseen and unforeseeable. Who prophesied that the 1914 war would produce Communism in Russia? Not even Lenin. Yet it is obvious that we have now swung from the one extreme of paying too little attention to Marxianism to the other extreme of paying too much attention to it. Even those of us who are not Marxians tend only too often today to talk as if the Marxian was the only issue in the world and as if all other issues were but by-products and creations of Marxianism.

It manifestly is not so. Take, for instance, the racial issue. Of course, Marxians have exploited the racial issue and have sought to stir up discontent among Asiatics and Africans against white hegemony. That was only to be expected, but it would be the height of folly to think that Communism had therefore created the racial issue and that the death of Communism would destroy it. On the contrary, the racial issue must inevitably have arisen, whether such a man as Marx had ever existed or not. It was not to be expected that the Asiatic or the African, having been taught by the white man to use tools and machines, would not after a time insist on using them for his own rather than for the white man's advantage. He only tolerated the white man's hegemony for a time because he was dazzled by the prestige of his success. He was tempted to believe that the white man had some mysterious secret through which he alone could rule successfully and he alone would be always victorious. It is not the Russians who have shattered that legend of invincibility: it is the Japanese, and it is unlikely that European hegemony will ever again be able to establish itself over an Asiatic nation, now that Asia has seen the European defeated—if only temporarily defeated—by the Japanese.

In what precise form the racial issue will present itself in the new world or after the next war, I do not pretend to prophesy, but the logic of the proposition is inescapable. Let us suppose Russia and

Communism to be wiped out even from the memory of man. It still remains that either the United States must impose herself as master, in one form or another, on the Asiatic world, or, if the Asiatics have a genuine freedom, then we have not got the world unity which our conflict promised us. Along either road—the road of American Imperialism or the road of America's abdication of Imperialism—lie possibilities of further conflict and of a Fourth World War beyond the Third World War. It is idle to say that America has no tradition of Imperialism, that if we shut our eyes to her own negro problem she has no ambition or tradition to rule other races. Up till now she has had other white men to do her imperialistic work for her. Now at last she is face to face and must for the first time in her history take her decisions for herself. Many of them are but choices of evils.

We are sometimes told that the solution lies in teaching birth-control to the Indians and the Chinese. But, without discussing the intrinsic rights and wrongs of birth-control, without even raising the question whether it be possible to impose upon a nation a radical change in its traditional breeding-habits without doing its inhabitants a great psychological violence, birth-control for the Orient is unlikely to be the road to peace for two reasons. First, the effects of a falling birth-rate on population after a long period of rising population are, as we know from our own experience, very gradual. For a generation or two we have indeed fewer children per woman but more women to bear children, since the number of women of child-bearing age depends not on the birth-rate of today but on the birth-rate of a quarter of a century ago. A policy which may stabilize the population in sixty years' time is of little value as a remedy against a collision, which, if it comes, will come in five or six years' time at most. Second, a totalitarian Emperor of the world might perhaps impose upon all mankind a decree by which all women had two children and were then sterilized. In the real world all that we can look for is 'birth-control propaganda'. It is certain that that propaganda will, as always, find more ready listeners among the townsmen than among countrymen, among civilized than among barbarians, among rich than among poor. Its effect, that is to say, will not be to reduce the total population of the world or the population of the East as against the West. Its effect will be merely to change the relative incidence of population and to provide causes of war

as the more fecund clamour for their living-space at the hands of the less fecund. Why should the Indians and the Chinese agree to breed less to please the white man? Are they not as likely to say, 'The world's problems are caused by the greed of the white man who insists on claiming for himself a fantastically high standard of living. Let us continue to breed. Then let us knock the sterile white man over the head and enter into his inheritance'? I am not saying that it would work out like that. I am not denying that it might well turn out that in killing the white man they had killed the goose that laid the golden egg. But the question is not whether the argument be a good one but whether it be an argument that the Oriental would be likely to use.

Or again, it is clearly true that all nations become to some extent that which they fight against. The British state is today quite clearly much more like the Prussian state, as a result of fighting two wars against it and twice defeating it, than it was in 1914. The United States has, it is true, lived through two wars without throwing overboard her democratic institutions. But they were not wars in which she ever stood in immediate danger of defeat. What sort of a United States would emerge from a long-drawn-out war with Communist Russia—a war in which her most dangerous enemies would be the enemies within the gates and in which therefore she would be compelled willy-nilly to a repressive policy at home? It is far from certain that the victor in a war between the United States and Communist Russia might not be a Communist United States—of course, called an anti-Communist United States, on the well-known principle of Huey Long that 'It is child's play to create a Fascist movement. All you have to do is to call it an anti-Fascist movement'—a society of Belial-worshippers such as Mr. Aldous Huxley foresees in Southern California in his *Apes and Essence*.

Besides the Marxians, so wrong in so many other things, were clearly right in their diagnosis that capitalism is of its nature the creed of an epoch, bearing within itself the seeds of its own decay, destined to pass away even if no external pressure compelled its modification. The Marxians, it is true, give no reason at all why Socialism, in the sense of the classless society, should take capitalism's place, and it is obvious that, wherever nominally Socialist experiments are tried, in Russia or elsewhere, society is by no means moving in the direction of a classless society. But, if with

every day that passes, the nation in socialist countries has less and less control over nationalized industries, equally in capitalist countries with every day that passes the capitalist has less and less control over capitalist industries. Whither then are we and whither is the United States moving? It is not my intention here to indulge in a prophecy, except to say that manifestly within the non-Communist world new forms of society are emerging and that their emergence is due to capitalism's own nature and has little to do with Communism one way or the other. Even if Communism were totally suppressed, we should still have the birth pangs of a new age and it is naïve and contrary to all experience to expect that the new shape of society should form itself without conflict. There are difficulties inherent in capitalism, caused by the fact that Capitalism is of its nature the creed of a developing society and therefore must of its nature develop into something beyond itself. Capitalism is of its nature a revolutionary creed. As a conservative creed it is an absurdity. Marx to some extent noted these contradictions. He did not invent them. Nor can Communism be held responsible for the gigantic physical problems which the non-Communist world has set itself by its reckless destruction of its own natural resources. Mr. Vogt in his 'Road to Survival' may in detail have exaggerated his case but there can be no dispute about it that the world with its increasing population is fast destroying its resources for production of food. There is a grave problem—a problem which it were idle to think could be solved merely by killing Mr. Stalin—a problem whose solution may indeed not be arrived at without violence.

It is unfortunately idle to argue from the moderation of men or nations, when they were not yet powerful, that they will therefore preserve that moderation in their day of power. For it is power itself which is the great corrupting force. Bakunin was undoubtedly right when he argued that it was merely childish in Marx to pretend that the Communists would exercise absolute power during the intermediate period of the dictatorship of the proletariat and not be corrupted by it, that they would at the term's end meekly lay down their power and make way for the classless society. But Bakunin's argument was founded not on the fact that Communists were Communists but on the fact that the Communists were men. So in the same way the pages of history are tragically scattered with the records of nations—Hungary,

Ireland, Italy, Poland—who in their days of subjection struggled gallantly to be free and in their day of victory tried to take away national freedom from others. So it is no criticism of America in particular to say that we cannot necessarily deduce what America would do in her day of world hegemony from what she has done before it. All power corrupts. All power carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

There is a further and most evident danger to world stability in modern times. If the war be delayed for some few years, I cannot feel any confidence in prophecies as to who will win it. I cannot feel any confidence for this reason. Throughout history we have estimated the chances of war on a calculation of who will in the long run be stronger. We still make such calculations and for the moment perhaps justly—and judge that whatever may fall upon ourselves or upon Western Europe in the early stages of a new world war, yet America's enormous industrial strength will make a final American victory inevitable. But soon we may move into a new world in which the weapons of destruction will be so enormously powerful that it matters nothing who is theoretically stronger in the long run, since there will be no long run. Whoever gets his blow in first will win. He who hesitates a second to consult his public opinion or to find a just cause for war will be lost. It will be a world of the survival of the unfreest. That is the only alternative to a long-drawn-out struggle.

Indeed, the lay visitor to Harwell cannot but be haunted by a yet more frightening thought. There in that underground world into which one can only penetrate armed with a 'film' which is necessary to preserve one's bones from rotting, strange bespectacled physicists emerge from the bowels to give unintelligible explanations of what is going on inside obscene, curved, zinc tubes that run up towards the sky. There is nothing to be seen except dials with revolving fingers pointing to enormous numbers. I asked Mr. C. S. Lewis whether it was from Harwell that he had derived the inspiration of his 'This Hideous Strength' but he assured me that he had never heard of Harwell. As always in the modern world, reality outran imagination.

The awful and self-evident truth is that only a small handful of men understand or are capable of understanding what is going on. The vast majority even of the workers do not understand or understand only the little corner of the work on which they are

themselves engaged. What is the good of talking about democratic control of such activities? What is the good of commissions of investigation or Ministers of Supply coming down to control such places? Who can control what he cannot understand? There is fortunately no reason at all to think that Harwell is not at present in the hands of scientists of the highest integrity. But, if six wicked men at Harwell were plotting the destruction of the universe, it seems to me unlikely that the rest of the world would ever know it. Here is—or, at any rate soon will be—a power so tremendous that debates about the nominal residence of sovereignty in the mock-states will seem but children's foolery. Beside the power of such men, the power of a totalitarian dictator is but the power of a nursery governess.

Indeed, I have an awful fear that these men may destroy the world not out of wickedness but by mistake. The atomic bomb, we are so often told, is an appalling weapon of destruction before which we do well to tremble, but, if only we can solve our political problems, then atomic energy can be used as an instrument of utter beneficence and an age of unexampled plenty awaits the world. But suppose that some one pulls the wrong lever by mistake! I can imagine many things more improbable than the achievement of the World State, the apparent solution of the atomic problem, the great opening ceremony of Utopia Unlimited, the President of Mankind coming down to perform the ceremony—and the President pushing the wrong button and blowing the whole scheme of things to smithereens.

So, though I yield to no man in my detestation of the Bolshevik regime, it seems to be naïve to expect that we shall attain an Antonine peace merely by removing the Bolshevik regime. On the contrary, if we can only remove it by war, then it seems almost certain that the Third World War will carry within itself the seeds of a Fourth World War, little as we may be able to foretell in confident detail the course of causes of that war. For war does not bring peace and violence does not bring gentleness.

Where then lies hope, if hope there be? It does, I confess, seem to me impossible to base a doctrine of pragmatic optimism on a foundation of metaphysical despair. What is life for? And, if it is for nothing, if it has no purpose, then it follows that there are no standards except the standards of personal hedonism. Now, it is, of course, true that there are some people who prefer peace to



war, some people, who, like Mr. Bertrand Russell, would prefer to sit around in a peaceful world making witty conversation. But the trouble is that there are plenty of other people who prefer war to peace, who delight in violence for its own sake. A reader of Mr. Schwarzschild's *Red Prussian* cannot doubt that Marx was such a man. He had a certain analytical power and made some acute observations on economic history. But analysis was to him incidental. It is clear that fundamentally both his economics and his philosophy were rubbish and an afterthought. What he liked was violence and war for their own sake. There was no war which he did not demand be transformed into a world war. As an afterthought he invented certain reasons why other nations should involve themselves in these wars, but the reasons were afterthoughts. What he liked was war for its own sake, and obviously it takes a very few war-mongers to plunge a world into war. That the majority prefers peace is irrelevant.

Therefore the first condition of peace is the re-establishment of absolute values, of the belief that war-mongering is wicked and that there are supernatural sanctions which punish wickedness. The details of the punishment, the details of code or creed are for this purpose of secondary importance. What is important is that there should be a general belief in a Voice that comes from beyond the world.

It would be beyond the thesis of this argument to discuss how these values declare themselves or what may be in detail their teaching. Nor indeed for this particular purpose does it matter so much what the code is as it matters that there should be a code. But it is certain that, if values are considered as purely subjective, then there is no force strong enough to carry man over from the world of small, local loyalties, in which our grandfathers lived, into this new world which demands loyalty to the larger units. The great psychological problem of which Professor Jung has written and of which I spoke in a previous article in *HORIZON* is insoluble in a world of purely subjective values, and, without its solution, all is insoluble. Cultured hedonism is a philosophy for a sheltered and aristocratic society. It does not breed the strength to confront fanaticism, since it provides no reason why anyone should care for what happens after his own time and its devotees are always under the temptation to compromise for the sake of a temporary hope of peace, until too late it is apparent that

a series of compromises, each made by a different person, have between them created a situation which is irretrievable. Marxism arose out of Victorian hedonism. It cannot be conquered by a return to Victorian hedonism. It can easily be conquered—and probably without physical combat—if it is confronted by a creed more logical than itself and self-confident enough to proclaim its own sanctions.

An idea must be confronted with an idea, but weapons must also be confronted with weapons. The Western world must oppose to the Soviet not so much a sufficient armament to defeat it as a sufficient armament to deter it from attacking.

## ANGUS WILSON

# TOTENTANZ

THE news of the Cappers' good fortune first became generally known at the Master's garden party. It was surprisingly well received, in view of the number of their enemies in the University, and for this the unusually fine weather was largely responsible. In their sub-arctic isolation, cut off from the main stream of Anglo-Saxon culture and its preferments, sodden with continual mists, pinched by perpetual north-east gales, kept always a little at bay by the natives with their self-satisfied homeliness and their smugly traditional hospitality, the dons and their wives formed a phalanx against spontaneous gaiety that would have satisfied John Knox himself. But rare though days of sunshine were, they transformed the town as completely as if it had been one of those scenes in a child's painting book on which you had only to sprinkle water for the brighter colours to emerge. The Master's lawns, surfeited with rain and mist, lay in flaunting spring green beneath the even deep blue of the July sky. The neat squares of the eighteenth-century burghers' houses and the twisted shapes of the massive grey lochside ruins recovered their designs from the blurring mists. The clumps of wallflowers, gold and copper, filling the crevices of the walls, seemed to mock the solemnity of the covenanting crows that croaked censoriously above them. The famous pale blue silk of the scholars' gowns flashed like silver airships beneath

the deeper sky. On such a day even the most mildewed and disappointed of the professors, the most blue and deadening of their wives felt impulses of generosity, or at any rate a freedom from bitterness, that allowed them to rejoice at a fellow prisoner's release. Only the youngest and most naïve research students could be deceived by the sun into brushing the mould off their *own* hopes and ideals, but if others had found a way back to their aims, well, good luck to them!—in any case the Cappers, especially Mrs. Capper, had only disturbed the general morass with their futile struggles, most people would be glad to see them go.

The Master's wife, always so eccentric in her large fringed cape, said in her deep voice, 'It's come just in time. Just in time that is for Isobel.'

'Just in time,' squeaked little Miss Thurkill, the assistant French lecturer, 'I should have thought any time was right for a great legacy like that', and she giggled, really the old woman said such odd, personal things.

'Yes, just in time,' repeated the Master's wife, she prided herself on understanding human beings and lost no opportunity of expounding them. 'A few months more and she would have rotted away.'

In the wide opening between the points of his old-fashioned, high Gladstone collar, the Master's protrusive Adam's apple wobbled, gulped. In Oxford or Cambridge his wife's eccentricity would have been an assistance, up here, had he not known exactly how to isolate her, it might have been an embarrassment.

'How typical of women,' he said in the unctuous but incisive voice that convinced so many business men and baillies that they were dealing with a scholar whose head was screwed on the right way. 'How typical of women to consider only the legacy. Very nice of course, a great help in their new sphere.' There was a trace of bitterness for his own wife's fortune so important when they started, had vanished through his unfortunate investments. 'But Capper's London Chair is the important thing. A new chair, too, Professorship of the History of Technics and Art. Here, of course, we've come to accept so many of Capper's ideas into our everyday thoughts, as a result of his immense powers of persuasion and . . . and his great enthusiasm', he paused, staring eagle-like beneath his bushy white eyebrows, the scholar who was judge of men 'that we forget how revolutionary some of them are', he had indeed

the vaguest conception of anything that his subordinates thought, an administrator has to keep above detail. 'No doubt there'll be fireworks, but I venture to suggest that Capper's youth and energy will win the day, don't you agree with me, Todhurst?'

Mr. Todhurst's white suet pudding face tufted with sandy hair was unimpressed. He was a great deal younger than Capper and still determined to remember what a backwater he was stranded in. 'Capper's noot so young,' he said, ostentatiously Yorkshire. 'Maybe they'll have heard it all before, and happen they'll tell him so too.'

But the Master was conveniently able to ignore Todhurst for red-faced Sir George was approaching, the wealthiest, most influential business man on the University Board. A tough and rough diamond with his Glaswegian accent and his powerful whiskied breath, Sir George was nevertheless impressed by the size of the legacy. 'Five hundred thousand pounds.' He gave a whistle, 'That's no so bad a sum. Though, mind you, this Government of robbers 'll be taking a tidy part of it away in taxation. But still I'm glad for the sake of his missus.' Perhaps, he thought, Mrs. Capper would help in getting Margaret presented at Court. How little he knew Isobel Capper, his wife would not have made the mistake.

'And this magnificent appointment coming along at the same time,' said the Master.

'Aye,' said Sir George, he did not understand that so well, 'there's no doubt Capper's a smart young chap.' Perhaps, he thought, the Board has been a bit slow, the Master was getting on and they might need a level-headed warm young fellow.

'Oh, there they are,' squeaked Miss Thurkill excitedly, 'I must say Isobel certainly looks . . . ' but she could find no words to describe Isobel's appearance, it was really so very outrée.

Nothing could have fitted Isobel Capper's combination of chic and Liberty artiness better than the ultra-smart dressing-gown effect of her New Look dress, the floating flimsiness of her little flowered hat. Her long stride was increased with excitement, even her thin white face had relaxed its tenseness and her amber eyes sparkled with triumph. Against the broad pink and black stripes of her elaborate, bustled dress, her red hair clashed like fire. She was a little impatient with the tail-end of an episode that she was glad to close, her mind was crowded with schemes, but still this

victory parade, though petty and provincial, would be a pleasant start to a new life. Brian, too, looked nearer twenty than forty, most of his hard, boyish charm, his emphasized friendliness and sincerity had returned with the prospect of his new appointment. He tossed his brown curly hair back from his forehead, as loose limbed, athletic, he leaped a deck chair to speak to Sir George. 'Hope so very much to see something of you and Lady Maclean if all those company meetings permit.' Before the Master he stood erect, serious, a little abashed. 'So impossible to speak adequately of what I shall carry away from here . . . ' There was no doubt that Brian was quite himself again. His even white teeth gleamed as he smiled at the Master's wife. To her he presented himself almost with a wink as the professional charmer, because after all she was not a woman you could fool. 'The awful thing is that my first thought about it is for all the fun we're going to have.' With Todhurst he shared their contempt for the backwater. 'Not going to say I wish you'd got the appointment, because I don't. Besides kunstgeschichte, old man! you and I know what a bloody fraud the whole thing is. Not that I don't intend to make something useful out of it all and that's exactly why I've got to pick your brains before I go South.' It was really amazing, Isobel thought, how the news had revived him—alive, so terribly keen and yet modest withal, and behind everything steady as a rock, a young chap of forty, in fact, who would go far.

Her own method was far more direct, she had never shared her husband's spontaneous sense of salesmanship, at times even found it nauseating. There was no need to bother about these people any more and she did not intend to do so. 'Silly to say we shall meet again, Sir George,' she told him, before he could get round to asking. 'It's only in the bonny North that the arts are conducted on purely business lines.' Todhurst, like all the other junior dons, she ignored. 'You must be so happy,' said Jessie Colquhoun, the poetess of the lochs. 'I shan't be *quite* happy,' Isobel replied, 'until we've crossed the Border.' 'Of course we shall lose touch,' she said to the Master's wife, 'but I'm not so pleased as you think I am.' And really, she thought, if the old woman's eccentricity had not been quite so provincial and frowsty it might have been possible to invite her to London. Her especial venom was reserved for the Master himself. 'Dear Mrs. Capper,' he intoned. 'What a tremendous loss you will be to us, and Capper, too, the ablest man on

the Faculty.' 'I wonder what you'll say to the Board when they wake up to their loss, as I'm sure they will,' replied Isobel. 'It'll take a lot of explaining.'

And yet the Master's wife was quite right, it was only just in time for both of them. Brian had begun to slip back badly in the last few years. His smile, the very centre of his charm, had grown too mechanical, gum recession was giving him an equine look. His self-satisfaction which had once made him so friendly to all—useful and useless alike—had begun to appear as heavy indifference. When he had first come North he had danced like a shadow-boxer from one group to another, making the powerful heady with praise, giving to the embittered a cherished moment of flattery, yet never committing himself; engaging all hearts by his youthful belief in Utopia, so much more acceptable because he was obviously so fundamentally sound. But with the years his smiling sincerity had begun to change to dogmatism; he could afford his own views and often they were not interesting, occasionally very dull. Younger colleagues annoyed him, he knew that they thought him out of date. Though he still wanted always to be liked, he had remained 'a young man' too long to have any technique for charming the *really* young. Faced by their contempt, he was often rude and sulky. The long apprenticeship in pleasing—the endless years of scholarships and examinations, of being the outstanding student of the year—were now too far behind to guard him from the warping atmosphere of the town. Commonwealths and Harmsworths were becoming remote memories, the Dulwich trams of his schooldays, the laurel bushes of his suburban childhood were closer to him now than the dreams and ambitions of Harvard, Oxford and Macgill. Had the chair come a year later he would probably have refused it. He had been such a success at thirty-three, it would have been easy to forget that at forty he was no longer an infant phenomenon.

If Brian had been rescued from the waters of Lethe in the nick of time, Isobel had been torn from the flames of hell. Her hatred of the University and the heat of her ambition had begun to burn her from within, until the strained, white face with cheekbones almost bursting through the skin and the over-intense eyes recalled some witch in death agonies. It did not take long for the superiority of her wit and taste to cease to bother a world in which they were unintelligible, depression and a lack of audience

soon gave her irony a 'governessy' flavour, until at last the legend of Mrs. Capper's sharp tongue had begun to bore herself as much as others. The gold and white satin, the wooden negro page of her Regency room had begun to fret her nerves with their shabbiness, yet it seemed pointless to furnish anew, even if she could have afforded it, for a world she so much despised. She made less and less pretence of reading or listening to music, and yet for months she would hardly stir outside. Everything that might have been successful in a more sophisticated society was misunderstood here: her intellectual Anglicanism was regarded as dowdy church-going, her beloved Caravaggio was confused with Greuze, her Purcell enthusiasm thought to be a hangover from the time when the 'Beggar's Opera' was all the rage; she would have done far better, been thought more daring with Medici, van Goghs and some records of the Bolero. She had come to watch all Brian's habits with horror, his little provincial don's sarcasms, his tobacco-jarred, golfey homeliness, his habit of pointing with his pipe and saying: 'Now hold on a minute I want to examine this average man or woman of yours more carefully'; or 'Anarchism, now, that's a very interesting word, but are we *quite* sure we know what it means?' She became steadily more afraid of 'going to pieces', knew herself to be toppling on the edge of a neurotic apathy from which she would never recover.

It was not surprising therefore that as she said good-bye for the third time to old Professor Green who was so absent-minded, she blessed the waves that had sucked Aunt Gladys down in a confusion of flannel petticoats and straggling grey hair, or the realistic sailor who had cut Uncle Joseph's bony fingers from the side of an overloaded lifeboat. She was rich, rich enough to realize her wildest ambitions; beside this Brian's professorship seemed of little importance. And yet in Isobel's growing schemes it had its place, for she had determined to storm London and she was quite shrewd enough to realize that she would never take that citadel by force of cash alone, far better to enter by the academic gate she knew so well.

By January six months of thick white mists and driving rain had finally dissipated the faint traces of July's charity, and with them all interest in the Cappers' fortunes. The Master's wife, dragged along by her two French bulldogs, was fighting her way through



Aidan's arch against a battery of hail when she all but collided with Miss Thurkill returning from lunch at the British Restaurant. She would have passed on with a nod but Miss Thurkill's red fox-terrier nose was quivering with news.

'The Cappers' good fortune seems to have been quite a sell,' she yelped. 'They've got that great house of her uncle's on their hands.'

'From all I hear about London conditions Pentonville prison would be a prize these days,' boomed the Master's wife.

'Oh, but that isn't all. It's quite grisly,' giggled Miss Thurkill. 'They've got to have the bodies in the house for ever and ever. It's part of the conditions of the will.'

Boredom had given the Master's wife a conviction of psychic as well as psychological powers and she suddenly 'felt aware of evil'.

'I was wrong when I said that silly little woman was saved in time. Pathetic creature with her cheap ambitions and her dressing-up clothes, she's in for a very bad time.'

Something of the old woman's prophetic mood was communicated to Miss Thurkill and she found herself saying:

'I know. Isn't it horrible?'

For a moment they stood outlined against the grey stormy sky, the Master's wife, her great black mackintosh cape billowing out behind, like an evil bat, Miss Thurkill sharp and thin like a barking jackal. Then the younger woman laughed nervously.

'Well, I must rush on or I'll be drenched to the skin.'

She could not hear the other's reply for the howling of the wind, but it sounded curiously like 'Why not?'

Miss Thurkill was, of course, exaggerating wildly when she spoke of 'bodies' in the house, because the bones of Uncle Joseph and Aunt Gladys were long since irrevocably Atlantic coral or on the way to it. But there was a clause in the will that was troublesome enough to give Isobel great cause for anxiety in the midst of her triumphant campaign for power.

A very short time had been needed to prove that the Cappers were well on the way to a brilliant success. Todhurst had proved a false prophet, Brian had been received with acclamations in the London academic world, not only within the University, but in the smart society of the Museums and Art Galleries, and in the houses of rich connoisseurs, art dealers, smart sociologists and

archaeologists with chic that lay around its periphery. It has to be remembered that many of those with Brian's peculiar 'brand of juvenile careerist charm were now getting a little passé and tired, whilst the post-war generation were somehow too total in outlook, too sure of their views to achieve the necessary flexibility, the required chameleon character. Brian might have passed unnoticed in 1935, in 1949 he appeared as a refreshing draught from the barbaric North. Already his name was a byword at the high tables of All Souls and King's—a man to watch. He talked on the Third Programme and on the Brains Trust—Isobel was a bit doubtful about this—he reviewed for smart weeklies and monthlies, he was commissioned to write a Pelican book.

Isobel was pleased with all this, but she aimed at something more than an academical sphere however chic—she was incurably romantic and over Brian's shoulder she saw a long line of soldier-mystics back from Persia, introvert explorers, able young Conservatives, important Dominicans, and Continental novelists with international reputations snatched from the jaws of O.G.P.U.—and at the centre, herself, the woman who counted. Brian's success would be a help, their money more so. For the moment her own role was a passive one, she was content if she 'went down', and for this her chic Anglo-Catholicism—almost Dominican in theological flavour, almost Jesuit Counter Reformation in aesthetic taste—combined with her spiteful wit, power of mimicry and interesting appearance, sufficed. Meanwhile she was watching and learning, entertaining lavishly, being pleasant to everyone and selecting carefully the important few who were to carry them on to the next stage—the most influential people within their present circle, but not, and here she was most careful, people who were too many jumps ahead; they would come later. By the time that this ridiculous, this insane clause in the will had been definitely proven, she had already chosen the four people who must be cultivated.

First and most obviously Professor Cadaver, that long gaunt old man with his corseted figure, his military moustache and his almost too beautiful clothes; foremost of archaeologists, author of 'Digging up the Dead', 'The Tomb my Treasurehouse' and 'Where Grave thy Victory?' It was not only the tombs of the ancient world on which he was a final authority, for in the intervals between his expeditions to the Near East and North Africa,

he had familiarized himself with all the principal cemeteries of the British Isles and had formed a remarkable collection of photographs of unusual graves. His enthusiasm for the ornate masonry of the nineteenth century had given him *réclame* among the devotees of Victorian art. He enthusiastically supported Brian's views on the sociological importance of burial customs, though he often irritated his younger colleague by the emphasis he seemed to lay upon the state of preservation of the bodies themselves. Over embalming in particular he would wax very enthusiastic—'Every feature, every limb preserved in their lifetime beauty,' he would say, 'and yet over all the odour of decay, the sweet stillness of death'. A strange old man! For Isobel, too, he seemed to have a great admiration, he would watch her with his old reptilian eyes for hours on end—'What wonderful bone-structure,' he would say; 'One can almost *see* the cheek bones'. 'How few people one sees today, Mrs. Capper, with your perfect pallor, at times it seems almost livid.'

Over Lady Maude she hesitated longer, there were so many old women—well-connected and rich—who were interested in art history and of these Lady Maude was physically the least prepossessing. With her little myopic pig's eyes, her wide-brimmed hats insecurely pinned to falling coils of hennaed hair and her enormous body encased in musquash she might have been passed over by any eye less sharp than Isobel's. But Lady Maude had been everywhere and seen everything. Treasures locked from all other Western gaze by Soviet secrecy or Muslim piety had been revealed to her. American millionaires had shown her masterpieces of provenance so dubious that they could not be publicly announced without international complications. She had spent many hours watching the best modern fakers at work. Her memory was detailed and exact, and though her eyesight was failing daily, her strong glasses still registered what she saw as though it had been photographed by the camera. Outside her knowledge of the arts she was intensely stupid and thought only of her food. This passionate greed she tried to conceal, but Isobel soon discovered it, and set out to win her with every delicacy that the Black Market could provide.

With Taste and Scholarship thus secured, Isobel began to cast about for a prop outside the smart academic world, a stake embedded deep in café society. The thorns that surrounded the

legacy were beginning to prick. She still refused to believe that the fantastic, the wicked clause, could really be valid and had set all London's lawyers to refute it. But even so there were snags. It was necessary, for example, that they should leave the large furnished flat which they had taken in Cadogan Street and occupy Uncle Joseph's rambling mansion in Portman Square, with its mass of miscellaneous middle-class junk assembled since 1890; so much the will made perfectly clear. The district, she felt, might do. But before the prospect of filling the house, and filling it correctly, with furniture, servants, and above all, guests, she faltered. It was at this moment that she met Guy Rice. Since coming to London she had seen so many beautiful pansy young men, all with the same standard voices, jargon, bow-ties and complicated hair do's, that she tended now to ignore them. That some of them were important, she felt no doubt, but it was difficult to distinguish amid such uniformity and she did not wish to make a mistake. Guy Rice, however, decided to know *her*. He sensed at once her insecurity, her hardness and her determination. She was just the wealthy peg he needed on which to hang his great flair for pastiche, which he saw with alarm was in danger of becoming a drug on the market. Mutual robbery, after all, was fair exchange, he thought, as he watched her talking to a little group before the fire.

'I can never understand', she was saying, 'why people who've made a mess of things should excuse themselves by saying that they can't accept authority. But then *I* don't think insanity's a very good plea.' It was one of her favourite themes. Guy patted the couch beside him.

'Come and sit here, dearie,' he said in the flat cockney whine he had always refused to lose—it was, after all, a distinction.

'You *do* try hard, dear, don't you? But you know it won't do.' And then he proceeded to lecture and advise her on how to behave. Amazingly, Isobel did not find herself at all annoyed. As he said, 'You could be so cosy, dear, if you tried, and that would be nice, wouldn't it? All this clever talk's very well, but what people want is a good old fashioned bit of fun. What they want is parties, great big slap up do's like we had in the old days', for Guy was a rather old young man. 'Lots of fun, childish, you know, elaborate and a wee bit nasty; and you're just the girl to give it to them.' He looked closely at her emaciated, white face. 'The skeleton at the feast, dear, that's you.'

Their rather surprising friendship grew daily—shopping, lunching, but mostly just sitting together over a cup of tea, for they both dearly loved a good gossip. He put her wise about everyone, hard-boiled estimates with a dash of good scout sentimentality—it was ‘I shouldn’t see too much of them, dear, they’re on the out. Poor old dears! They say they were ever such naughties once,’ or, ‘Cling on for dear life. She’s useful. Let her talk, duckie, that’s the thing. She likes it. Gets a bit lonely sometimes, I expect, like we all do.’ He reassured her, too, about her husband.

‘What do you think of Brian?’ she had asked.

‘Same as you do, dear. He bores me dizzy. But don’t you worry, there’s thousands love that sort of thing. Takes all sorts to make a world.’

He put her clothes right for her, saying with a sigh, ‘Oh, Isobel, dear, you *do* look tatty’, until she left behind that touch of outré-artiness that the Master’s wife had been so quick to see. With his help she made a magnificent, if somewhat over-perfect, spectacle of the Portman Square Mansion. His knowledge of interior decoration was very professional and with enough money and rooms he let his love of pastiche run wild. He was wise enough to leave the show pieces—the Zurbaran, the Fragonard, the Samuel Palmers and the Bracqués to the Professor and Lady Maude—but for the rest he just let rip. There were Regency bedrooms, a Spanish Baroque dining room, a Second Empire room, a Victorian study, something amusing in Art Nouveau; but his greatest triumph of all was a large lavatory with tubular furniture, American cloth and cacti in pots. ‘Let’s have a dear old pre-war lav. in the nice old-fashioned Munich style,’ he had said and the Cappers wondering agreed.

On one point only did they differ, Isobel was adamant in favour of doing things as economically as possible, both she and Brian had an innate taste for saving. With this aspect of her life Guy refused to be concerned, but he introduced her to her fourth great prop—Tanya Mule.

‘She’s the biggest bitch unhung, duckie,’ he said, ‘but she’ll touch propositions no one else will. She’s had it all her own way ever since the war, when “fiddling” began in a big way.’

Mrs. Mule had been very beautiful in the style of Gladys Cooper, but now her face was ravaged into a million lines and

D

wrinkles from which two large and deep blue eyes stared in dead appeal; she wore her hair piled up very high and coloured very purple; she always dressed in the smartest black of Knightsbridge with a collar of pearls. She was of the greatest help to Isobel, for although she charged a high commission, she knew every illegal avenue for getting servants and furniture and decorator's men and unrationed food; she could smell out bankruptcy over miles of territory and was always first at the sale; she knew every owner of objets d'art who was in distress and exactly how little they could be made to take. No wonder, then, that with four such allies Isobel felt sure of her campaign.

Suddenly, however, in the flush of victory the great blow struck her—the lawyers decided that the wicked, criminal lunatic clause in Uncle Joseph's will must stand. Even Brian was forced up from beneath his life of lectures, and talks, and dinners to admit that the crisis was serious. Isobel was in despair. She looked at the still unfurnished drawing room—they had decided on Louis Treize—and thought of the horrors that must be perpetrated there. Certainly the issue was too big to be decided alone, they must call a council of their allies.

Isobel paced up and down in front of the great open fire as she talked, pulling her cigarette out of her tautened mouth and blowing quick angry puffs of smoke. She looked now at the Zurbaran friar with his ape and his owl, now at the blue and buff tapestried huntsmen who rode among the fleshy nymphs and satyrs, occasionally she glanced at Guy as he lay sprawled on the floor, twirling a Christmas rose, but never at Brian, or Lady Maude, Mrs. Mule or the Professor as they sat upright on their high-backed tapestried chairs. 'I had hoped never to have to tell you,' she said. 'Of course, it's absolutely clear that Uncle Joseph and Aunt Gladys were completely insane at the time when the will was made, but apparently the law doesn't care about that. Oh! it's so typical of a country where sentimentalism reigns supreme without regard for God's authority or even for the Natural law for that matter. A crazy, useless old couple, steeped in some nonconformist nonsense, decide on an act of tyrannous interference with the future and all the lawyers can talk about is the liberty of an Englishman to dispose of his money as he wishes. Just because of that, the whole of our lives—Brian's and mine—are to be ruined, we're to be made a laughing stock. Just listen to

this: "If the great Harvester should see fit to gather my dear wife and me to Him when we are on the high seas or in any other manner by which our mortal remains may not be recovered for proper Christian burial and in places where our dear niece and nephew, or under God, other heirs may decently commune with us and in other approved ways show us their respect and affection, then I direct that two memorials, which I have already caused to be made, shall be set in that room in our house in Portman Square in which they entertain their friends, that we may in some way share, assist and participate in their happy pastimes. This is absolutely to be carried out, so that if they shall not agree the whole of our estate shall pass to the charities hereinafter named." And that Isobel cried, *'that is what the law says we shall have to do.'* She paused, dramatically waving the document in the air. 'Well,' said Guy, 'I'm not partial to monuments myself, but they can be very nice, Isobel dear.' 'Nice,' cried Isobel, 'nice. Come and look'; and she threw open the great double doors into the drawing-room. The little party followed her solemnly.

It was perfectly true that the monuments could not be called nice. In the first place they were each seven feet high. Then they were made in white marble—not solid mid-Victorian, something could have been done with that, nor baroque, with angels and gold trumpets, which would have been better still, they were in the most exaggeratedly simple modern good taste by an amateur craftsman, a long way after Eric Gill. 'My dear,' said Guy, 'they're horrors'; and Lady Maude remarked that they were not the kind of thing one ever wanted to see. The lettering, too, was bold, modern and very artful—one read 'Joseph Briggs. Ready at the call.' and the other 'Gladys Briggs. Steel true, blade straight, the Great Artificer made my mate.' Professor Cadaver was most distressed by them, 'Really, without *anything* in them', he kept on saying. 'Nothing, not even ashes. It all seems most unfortunate.' He appeared to feel that a great opportunity had been missed. No one had any suggestion to make. Mrs. Mule knew the names of many crooked lawyers and even a criminal undertaker, but this did not seem to be quite in their line. Lady Maude privately thought that as long as the dining room and kitchen could function there was really very little reason for anxiety. They all stood about in gloom, when suddenly Guy cried, 'What did you say the lawyers were called?' 'Robertson, Naismith and White,' said



Isobel, 'but it's no good, we've gone over all that.' 'Trust little Guy, dear,' said her friend. Soon his voice could be heard excitedly talking over the telephone. He was there for more than twenty minutes, they could hear little of what he said, though once he screamed rather angrily 'Never said I did say I did say I did', and at least twice he cried petulantly 'Aow, pooh!' When he returned he put his hand on Isobel's shoulder. 'It's all right, ducks,' he said. 'I've fixed it. Now we can all be cosy and that's nice, isn't it?' Sitting tailor-wise on the floor, he produced his solution with reasonable pride. 'You see,' he said, 'it only says in the will "set in that room in which they entertain their friends"'. But it doesn't say you need entertain with those great horrors in the room more than once, and after a great deal of tiresome talk those lawyers have agreed that I'm right. For that one entertainment we'll build our setting round the horrors, Isobel dear, everything morbid and ghostly. Your first big reception, duckie, shall be a Totentanz. It's just the sort of special send off you need. After that, pack the beastly things off, and Presto, dear, back to normal.'

The Totentanz was Isobel's greatest, alas! her last, triumph. The vast room was swathed in black and purple, against which the huge white monuments and other smaller tombstones specially designed for the occasion stood out in bold relief. The waiters and barmen were dressed as white skeletons or elaborate Victorian mutes with black ostrich plumes. The open fire place was arranged as a crematorium fire, and the chairs and tables were coffins made in various woods. Musical archives had been ransacked for funeral music of every age and clime. A famous Jewish contralto wailed like the ghetto, an African beat the tomtom as it is played at human sacrifices, an Irish tenor made everyone weep with his wake songs. Supper was announced by 'The Last Post' on a bugle and hearses were provided to carry the guests home.

Some of the costumes were most original. Mrs. Mule came tritely but aptly enough as a Vampire. Lady Maude with her hair screwed up in a handkerchief and dressed in a shapeless gown was strikingly successful as Marie Antoinette shaved for the guillotine. Professor Cadaver dressed up as a Corpse Eater was as good as Boris Karloff; he clearly enjoyed every minute of the party, indeed his snake-like slit eyes darted in every direction at the

many beautiful young women dressed as corpses and his manner became so incoherent and excited before he left that Isobel felt quite afraid to let him go home alone. Guy had thought at first of coming as Millais's Ophelia, but he remembered the harm done to the original model's health and decided against it. With flowing hair and marbled features, however, he made a very handsome 'Suicide of Chatterton'. Isobel thought he seemed a little melancholy during the evening, but when she asked him if anything was wrong he replied quite absently, 'No, dear, nothing really. Half in love with easeful death, I 'spose. I mean all this fun is rather hell when it comes to the point, isn't it?' But when he saw her face cloud, he said, 'Don't you worry, ducks, you've arrived', and, in fact, Isobel, was too happy to think of anyone but herself. For many hours after the last guests had departed, she sat happily chipping away at the monuments with a hammer. She sang a little to herself: 'I've beaten you, Uncle and Auntie dear, I hope it's the last time you'll bother us here.'

Guy felt very old and weary as he let himself into his one-roomed luxury flat. He realized that Isobel would not be needing him much longer, soon she would be on the way to spheres beyond his ken. There were so many really young men who could do his stuff now and they didn't get bored or tired in the middle like he did. Suddenly he saw a letter in the familiar, uneducated handwriting lying on the mat. He turned giddy for a moment and leaned against the wall. It would be impossible to go on finding money like this for ever. Perhaps this time he could get it from Isobel, after all she owed most of her success to him, but it would hasten the inevitable break with her. And even if he had the courage to settle this, there were so many more demands in different uneducated hands, so much more past sentimentalism turned to fear. He lay for a long time in the deep green bath, then sat in front of his double mirror to perform a complicated routine with creams and powders. At last he put on a crimson and white silk dressing gown and hung his Chatterton wig and costume in the wardrobe. He wished so much that Chatterton were there to talk to. Then going to the white painted medicine cupboard, he took out his bottle of luminal. 'In times like these,' he said aloud, 'there's nothing like a good old overdose to pull one through.'

Lady Maude enjoyed the party immensely. The funeral baked meats were delicious and Isobel had seen that the old lady had all she wanted. She sat on the edge of her great double bed, with her grey hair straggling about her shoulders, and swung her thick white feet with their knobbly blue veins. The caviare and chicken mayonnaise and Omelette Surprise lay heavy upon her, but she found, as usual, that indigestion only made her the more hungry. Suddenly she remembered the game pie in the larder. She put on her ancient padded pink dressing gown and tiptoed downstairs—it would not do for the Danbys to hear her, servants could make one look so foolish. But when she opened the larder, she was horrified to find that someone had forestalled her, the delicious, rich game pie had been removed. The poor, cheated lady was not long in finding the thief. She padded into the kitchen and there, seated at the table, noisily guzzling the pie, was a very young man with long fair hair, a red and blue checked shirt and a white silk tie with girls in scarlet bathing costumes on it; he looked as though he suffered from adenoids. Lady Maude had read a good deal in her favourite newspapers about spivs and burglars so that she was not greatly surprised. Had he been in the act of removing the silver, she would have fled in alarm, but as it was she felt nothing but anger. Her whole social foundation seemed to shake beneath the wanton looting of her favourite food. She immediately rushed towards him, shouting for help. The man—he was little more than a youth and very frightened—struck at her wildly with a heavy iron bar. Lady Maude fell backwards upon the table, almost unconscious and bleeding profusely. Then the boy completely lost his head and, seizing up the kitchen meat axe, with a few wild strokes he severed her head from her body. She died like a queen.

Only the moon lit the vast spaces of Brompton Cemetery, showing up here a tomb and there a yew tree. Professor Cadaver's eyes were wild and his hands shook as he glided down the central pathway. His head still whirled with the fumes of the party and a thousand beautiful corpses danced before his eyes. An early underground train rattled in the distance and he hurried his steps. At last he reached his objective—a freshly dug grave on which wooden planks and dying wreaths were piled. The Professor began feverishly to tear these away, but he was getting old and neither his sight nor his step were as sure as they had been, he caught his foot in a rope and fell nine or ten feet into the tomb.

When they found him in the morning his neck was broken. The papers hushed up the affair, and a Sunday newspaper in an article entitled 'Has Science the Right?' only confused the matter by describing him as a professor of anatomy and talking obscurely of Burke and Hare.

It was the end of Isobel's hopes. True, Mrs. Mule still remained to play the vampire, but without the others she was as nothing. Indeed, the position for Isobel was worse than when she arrived in London, for it would take a long time to live down her close association with the Professor and Guy. Brian was a little non-plussed at first, but there was so much to do at the University, that he had little time to think of what might have been. He was now the centre of a circle of students and lecturers who listened to his every word. As Isobel's social schemes faded, he began to fill the house with his friends. Sometimes she would find him standing full square before the Zurbaran pointing the end of his pipe at a party of earnest young men sitting bolt upright on the tapestried chairs. 'Ah,' he would be saying jocosely, 'but you haven't yet proved to me that your famous average man or woman is anything but a fiction' or 'but look here, Wotherspoon, you can't just throw words like "beauty" or "formal design" about like that. We must define our terms.' Once she discovered a tobacco pouch and a Dorothy Sayer's detective novel on a tubular chair in the 'dear old lav'. But if Brian had turned the house into a W.E.A. lecture centre, Isobel would not have protested now. Her thoughts were too much with the dead. She sat all day in the vast empty drawing room, where the two great monuments threw their giant shadows over her. Here she would smoke an endless chain of cigarettes and drink tea off unopened packing cases. Occasionally she would glance up at the inscriptions with a look of mute appeal, but she never seemed to find an answer. She made less and less pretence of reading and listening to good music, and yet for months on end would hardly stir from the house.

A faint April sun shone down upon the wet pavements of the High Street, casting a faint and melancholy light upon the pools of rain that had gathered here and there among the cobblestones. It was a deceptive gleam, however, for the wind was piercingly cold. Miss Thurkill drew her B.A. gown tightly around her thin frame as she emerged from the lecture hall and hurried off to the

Heather Café. Turning the corner by Strachan's bookshop, she saw the Master's wife advancing upon her. Despite the freezing weather, the old lady moved slowly, for the bitter winter's crop of influenza and bronchitis had weakened her heart; she seemed now as fat and waddling as her bulldogs.

'Did you get the London appointment?' she shouted; it was a cruel question, for she knew already the negative reply. 'Back to the tomb, eh?' she went on. 'Ah well! at least we know we're dead here.'

Miss Thurkill giggled nervously; 'London didn't seem very alive,' she said. 'I went to see the Cappers, but I couldn't get any reply. The whole house seemed to be shut up.'

'Got the plague, I expect,' said the Master's wife, 'took it from here,' and as she laughed to herself, she crouched forward like some huge, squat toad.

'Isobel certainly hasn't been the success she supposed,' hissed Miss Thurkill, writhing like a malicious snake. 'Well, I shall catch my death of cold if I stay here,' she added, and hurried on.

The old lady's voice came to her in the gale that blew down the street: 'No one would notice the difference', it seemed to cry.

ALLANAH HARPER

## RECOLLECTIONS OF LÉON-PAUL FARGUE

*Hop! Le tour de clef du temps m'a serré le cœur.*

I CANNOT think of him as dead or dying: he belonged so essentially to life. I still expect to see him at the turn of a street corner, or appearing suddenly in the doorway of a drawing-room—to be greeted by everyone with the usual exclamation of pleasure: '*Voilà Fargue*'.

The pavements of Paris will miss you, great bear-with the eyes of a Persian prince.

D'autres viendront s'asseoir sur la chaise de fer.

D'autres verront cela quand je ne serai plus,

La lumière oubliera ceux qui l'ont tant aimé.

Other poets express their poetry on paper, but Fargue's conversation was poetry; every sentence was alive with images, everything he looked at, everything he touched, revealed its secret nature, its intimate life, its interior music. If only I could remember, Fargue, the illuminating, the moving, the malicious, the burlesque, the continuous invention of your conversation as we walked together through the streets of Paris. Yes, you were always late for your appointments because you stopped and looked, at a light in a window, at the form of a tree, the movements of an insect; and the street and the night became alive through you, dear sorcerer.

'Il aime à descendre dans la ville, à l'heure où le ciel ferme à l'horizon comme une vaste phalène. Il s'enforce au cœur de la rue comme un ouvrier dans sa tranchée . . .'

('He likes to go forth into the town at that magic hour when the sky folds its wings on the horizon like an enormous moth. He plunges into the very heart of the street like a workman deep in his trench . . .')

A sorcerer who revealed also the sadness, the absurdity, as well as the joy, because of the love you gave to the things you looked at and the things you touched. Malice you reserved for the bourgeois, those square-mouthed middlemen, the worldly, the hard-hearted, the snobs.

★

★

★

Léon-Paul Fargue was Paris and Paris was his, and he re-created it for us. In a sense, he was the poet of Paris even more than Baudelaire, his verse is more intimate than those overwhelming masterpieces that take us beyond the particular into the universal. Fargue's vision was so personal, his relations with his surroundings so intimate that he pierced through objects; mute things spoke to him, animals and human beings communicated with him in their private, their secret voices. Fargue's poetry and prose poetry are composed of a fusion of the colloquial and the mysterious; his language is accessible to all the senses like the language of the great symbolists. Fargue was more completely aware than most poets of the relation of musical notes to word sounds. He heard the music inherent in things and he found or created words which conveyed that music, those particular sounds. Remembering the past, which was so important to him, he remembers the music of a house or a person or an object; he is attracted back to the place or the time by the music playing in his memory. He

hears the 'derniers doigts de la musique'. Here Fargue describes going back to the house he lived in as a small boy.

'Du fond de la ville, il était attiré par cette porte . . . Ces melodies bégayantes qui émergent interdites du fond de soixantes années. Et dans une chambre de cinquième un ancien petit garçon qui écoute.

'Loin, loin, si loin, pensais-je. Et la musique était là, qui mourait d'envie d'entrer.'

Fargue was in life as he is in his writing: of an incurable *bonhomie*; it served as a cover for a sensibility so delicate that everything bruised it. I cannot do better than quote Valéry's words about him; 'his invention is limitless, so prompt, so fecund and frequent, that it gives an impression of being static, and of infinitely sustained scintillations; at the same time combining itself in him with the gift—or the ill—of the most simple and sad tenderness. Never has there been such a curious combination. Suddenly the most delicate emotion, then a profound resentment against the bitterness of living, penetrating, suspending, confounding, confusing the sparkling work of the inventive spirit. The soul of enchantment "trembles and is amazed". His phantasmagoria is abysmal. There are some beings so sensitive that the mere approach of the night brings inexplicable tears to their eyes.'

Fargue's great friends were musicians, Claude Debussy, Ravel. He has written admirably about them and their music. He has conjured up the mysterious quality of those evenings at Debussy's apartment where the composer played all night and the air became impregnated with strange new sounds, subtle and sensual nocturnal music that expressed the undertones and overtones, the *tons sourds*, which lie behind things. Fargue wrote:

'Certaines grandeurs et valeurs . . . Je ne saurais te les exprimer que par la musique, ou par des noms propres remplis de tendresse. La musique dira ces mots de lumière pour lesquels sont fait tous les autres, qui les coiffent de leurs feuilles sombres.'

Léon-Paul Fargue was a most accurate interpreter of his own period, he is also the link between the delicacy of Verlaine and the robustness of Villon. He combines these two qualities. Fargue is, I think, the most original French poet since Rimbaud. As great an innovator as Apollinaire who owed him much—in the same manner as Fargue himself was indebted to Mallarmé, the master of the Symbolists, the alchemist of hermetic art. But Fargue was



not an imitator of anyone. Perhaps the greatest living French poet, Paul Claudel, a poet whose spiritual experience is deeper and whose work is of vaster dimensions than Fargue's, said that Fargue was a poet born. 'That is, not a spectator, but a maker of life; not a copyist, but an associate and collaborator of creation, one to whom the Fairy had given a grain of salt and a spark of fire . . . When one reads a page of Fargue, the lines do not remain still like an inanimate passementerie, but the whole rectangle of the page starts to walk and to boil, agitated by a kind of colloidal movement like a market place on a Saturday or the street in front of the Town Hall the day of the drawing of the lottery! One sees dancing, turning, pushing, taking arms, taking off hats, pinching in their gussets with an imperceptible hand a microscopic watch, a crowd of tiny beings prodigiously active and alive, made of a name, a noun, an adjective, a verb and an adverb, a comma and an exclamation mark, Claudel said, 'Les mots de Fargue ne sont pas fait pour le sec herbier d'un livre, ils rutilent tous à la fois par transparence, sur du verre'.

★                      ★                      ★

I remember my first meeting with Fargue; it was in the offices of the publisher Fourcade. I was then editing the review, *Échanges*, published there. Jean Cassou brought Fargue into my office saying that if I could get something by Fargue for my review, it would be an achievement as he was the most difficult writer to get a manuscript from. He promises, but forgets or does not feel inclined to work; with luck you may get a poem in two years' time. Léon-Paul Fargue stared at me with embarrassing intentness and declared that he loved tall, fair English girls. He picked up a copy of *Sous la Lampe* and dedicated it to me, *de Fafner à la Valkure*. A poem was sticking out of his pocket, written in the most beautiful engraved handwriting; he consented to read it to me. In his deep, rather guttural voice, the butt end of a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, he read a poem of such delicacy and lightness, of such exquisite perfection that the words seem to dance a ballet in the air.

Les salades d'escarole  
 Dansent en robe à panier  
 Sous la lune blonde et molle  
 Qui se lève pour souper.

What fantastic imagination he had, what verbal inventiveness! His creation of new words, and the new associations he made between words, his prodigious analogies and metaphors, his creation of phonetic caricature, give fresh life to the French language. He was doing in his manner what Joyce was doing for the English language.

The next day, Fargue came into Fourcade's and asked whether I would accompany him to the *Jardin des Plantes*.<sup>1</sup> I was delighted at any excuse not to work, and I found myself walking, or rather 'turning the pages of the street', with a Chinese Emperor dressed in a blue serge suit. He loved everything that was of the people. We stopped at an obscure café where Fargue was greeted by stout ladies behind the *zinc* as *vieux Coco*, and kissed by waitresses. Although he stopped every few minutes to look at this, to look at that, because he was constantly a poet and never for a moment ceased to be, we did arrive at the *Jardin des Plantes*. At the entrance he pointed to a small eighteenth-century lodge, 'that is where I want to live', he said, 'if only they would make me Curator of the Zoo.' To live in such a house, to be surrounded by creatures that are 'more sympathetic than man'. He was afraid, however, that Colette would get the offer because she was a lion tamer. Had I seen her power over animals? 'No one', I agreed, 'could write like Colette about animals and plants.'

I have a predilection for lemurs, so it was to their cage that we proceeded. Fargue's eyes narrowed to slits as he watched the black and white ringed tails curled like question marks over arched backs, jumping up and down as though they were on invisible springs; the lemurs shrieked—cack, cack, cack! We jumped up and down in front of them which threw them into a frenzy of excitement. A quick glance into their pale gold eyes that had the expression of angels, and we slunk away in shame, for belonging to the race who had imprisoned them.

We found ourselves in the aquarium and stood for a long time peering into the glass worlds. Fargue conversed with the fish so intimately that they became as close to us in their private lives as our warm-blooded relations; he then told me their subaqueous thoughts. We praised the glorious colouring of the Siamese fighting fish—they seemed illuminated from within, such burning

<sup>1</sup>Fargue in the *Jardin des Plantes* is quoted from *All Trivial Fond Records*, by Allanah Harper. Harper Bros. 1948.

blues and reds could hardly be found in the heavenly world of flowers and birds. Then occurred a tragedy which filled us with horror. An anemone opened its feathery crown and devoured an exquisite sea horse as it slept, its prehensile tail curled around the branch of a coral tree. 'Look', said Fargue, 'behind those waving plants which look like green veils or the finest transparent green paper, there is a starfish pursuing a butterfly-fish.' The starfish opened its mouth, made of transparent glass-like tubes, and sucked into itself the whole body of this beautiful little fish whose fins resembled the wings of a brown and yellow butterfly.

Turning away, disillusioned, Fargue suggested, 'somewhere in the Universe there must be higher beings who obey less elementary laws'. We, I thought, 'born to one law, to another bound', seem less disturbed than our cousins the fish, to prey upon each other. A clump of soldiers were strutting before the admiring glances of two nursery-maids wheeling gay prams. 'Do away with uniforms,' Fargue observed, 'and no woman would cast soft glances at such empty noodles.' (There was nothing he hated more than seeing any man, excepting himself, ogling a woman.) 'Who would wage war in our hideous suits and felt hats!' I laughed; he seized my arm and continued, 'another way to avoid the mass slaughter that human beings seem to need to indulge in every few years, would be to build a very high wall in a desert and let the generals and officers of the two enemy countries fight it out between themselves to the last man. We would put wax in our ears while it was going on, and in no way allow these aggressive monsters to interfere with our private lives.'

\*                      \*                      \*

Fargue is the poet of the melancholy of cities. I can think of no other writer who gives the local tone, the particular atmosphere of the place and the thing described with such precise analogy. He wrote much about barrel-organs in sad streets. The barrel-organ in his own street facing the Gare de l'Est, had a monkey on its carpet and smelled of petrol, it played a tune that accompanied the trains into the station. He wrote of 'the sad street like a discharged baker's boy, and all the houses have on their grey aprons . . .'

Occasionally however, Fargue made excursions into the country. And when he did, he saw marvellous things.

Elle a vu un jour  
 Un autel dans un champ de blé.  
 C'était blanc et étincelant  
 Et le vent faisait peur aux lumières.  
 (An altar in a cornfield,  
 White and sparkling,  
 And the wind making the lights shudder . . .)

or,

'Ah! ces découvertes d'insectes dans les tailles, l'énorme chenille rayonnante aux coroncules oranges qui faisait la boucle en accolant, ses chaussons verts sur un grillage . . . '

('Ah, those discoveries of insects in the hedges, the huge caterpillar gleaming against the tawny blossoms as it circles with its green slippers on the latticed hedge.')

Nous avons  
 Nous aimons tout  
 Le frelon qui s'encloche aux calices poivrés,  
 La libellule au treillis brusque,  
 Au mica bleu,  
 Chevrote un peu—s'aimante  
 Aux courants les plus doux.  
 Aux bois d'étranges jeux mènent la valse lente . . .

And this,

'Je saute le fossé qui est toujours plein de bêtes étranges . . . Il y a une fourmilière qui bouge comme de la fumée . . . Plus tard, un complot de champignons derrière un chêne . . . Ils tiennent leur marché couvert . . . '

('I jumped the ditch that is always full of strange creatures . . . There was an ant-hill that moved like smoke . . . Further on a conspiracy of mushrooms behind an oak . . . They were holding their covered market.')

Fargue composed his work with the precision of an artisan selecting and examining each piece before constructing a mosaic; or a naturalist dissecting the minute mechanism of an insect. Minuteness was visible to his microscopic eye.

Flies also write everywhere with a small noise.

A patrol of mosquitoes dances sometimes around our heads, like a sad little head of hair, like St. Elmo's fire at the peak of some midnight spar.

or :

‘Dans l’ombre où sont éteints les déjeuners sur l’herbe; où les insectes ont déserté les métiers’ (*Poèmes*).

★

★

★

In Fargue, poetry and life were consubstantial; writing poetry was the crystallization of memory, in fact the only manner by which those precious memories were made eternal, were turned into black diamonds that gave off sparks of fire and lit up the darkness of his night. He was so much a poet in his living that had he not written a line he would have lived his poetry, would have illuminated the lives of his friends by the fantastic imagery of his conversation. He juggled with words as he spoke.

‘J’écris pour mettre de l’ordre dans ma sensualité. Mais il n’est même pas nécessaire de noircir du papier pour être poète. La poésie, je l’ai dit naguère et je le dit encore, exprime un état psycho-physiologique. Pour parler plus simplement, on vit ou on ne vit pas en état de poésie. Tout ce qui dans la vie, n’a pas pour objet l’intérêt matériel, pour opération de l’esprit la pensée de tirer des outres le meilleur, vous donne droit à la bonne route et peut vous conduire à l’état poétique.’

(‘I write to put order in my sensuality. It is not necessary to blacken paper in order to be a poet. Poetry expresses a psycho-physiological state, to put it simply, one lives or one does not live in a state of poetry. Everything in life that has no material interest for its object gives you the right to the good road and can lead to the poetic condition. As for the poet-writer, well, he is a hunter. His mission is to bring back beauty for everyone . . .’)

Fortunately for posterity, Léon-Paul Fargue was a hunter who brought back all kinds of fabulous creatures both beautiful and strange. He was the most human of writers. He used to say that he had long made his choice—he preferred men to works. ‘Do not specialize. Beware of Orthopædia. Remain a distinguished amateur.’

‘Qu’importe que tu penses le monde ou qu’il te pense, que nous soyons les crayons électriques, les vespertillons, les étincelles d’une association foudroyante, d’une catalyses divine, d’une poussée de granule cosmique, de l’erreur d’un vortex lanceur d’un lasso de rides géniales, et que je me dévide vertigineusement avec ma chaise. Tout ce que nous pouvons dire, faire et trouver, va, c’est

de l'homme, et l'Inconnue joue avec nous comme le chat avec le souris.'

('What matter whether you dream the world or the world dreams you, what matter whether we are electric pencils, a kind of bat, the sparks of an overwhelming association, a divine catalyst, a growth of the cosmic dust, the error of a vortex swinging the master loops of a lasso, or whether I empty myself out vertiginously with my chair. All we can say, find or do, after all! is of man, and the Unknown plays with us as the cat plays with the mouse.')

But Fargue also wrote, 'It is not necessary to write to be a poet. One must be in a state of grace and contemplation, and that is enough.'

One Sunday we were invited to visit the same friends in the country. Fargue asked me to fetch him in my car at his apartment in the rue Château-Landon, overlooking the intricate railway terminus of the Gare de l'Est. 'Gare de la douleur, j'ai fait toutes routes.' I stood on the landing ringing vainly at the front door. After my third effort, I was about to leave when a voice from some inner room growled, 'There's nobody at home'. 'It's I,' I faltered. He opened. 'I'm expecting the bailiff to seize my things,' he explained with a smile. The furniture in the first room was piled up as if about to be removed. The only other room I saw was Fargue's bedroom-workroom, the disorder of which was such that it was by miracle alone that he found a manuscript, a letter or an article of clothing. Mountains of piled-up books, papers, ash-trays and cigarette ends; odd brushes, gay post-cards, faded photographs and discarded bills lay all pell-mell. In the middle of the bed, curled like a snake, lay a cat with eyes like polished pebbles. Over the divan hung a photograph of Baudelaire, and below it one of Rimbaud in his First Communion clothes, looking like an angel who might at any moment put out his tongue.

Fargue was of course not ready to leave for the country. He still had several things to do. I feared that we would never arrive in time for luncheon at the château of a lady whose name sounds like the history of France. It was not the kind of house where one would be welcome late. But I was soon lost in the delight of discoveries that are to be disclosed by the untidiness of a poet's room where 'everything, even horror itself, turns into enchantment'. Fargue came back from the finishing touches of his toilet, 'beau, élégant, correct comme le génie'. His collar was as white

and flat as milk, his tie a discreet brocade, and in the button-hole of his serge jacket, like the eye of a glow-worm, peered the rosette of the *Legion of Honour*. At last he's ready, I thought, but suddenly his hawk eye caught sight of a flea coming out of the forest of the cat's fur. Fargue said that he had always wanted to write a poem about a flea who sucked the blood of two lovers, which mixing made them one. I recited some lines from the *Flea* of John Donne, and Fargue was overjoyed. He had not heard of it and asked me if it were written by a young English poet! He loved the line, 'And in this flea our two bloods mingled be', and 'cloystered in these living walls of jet'. He told me that he had seen a model of a flea in a museum, enlarged to the size of a small dog, and that it was so formidable a monster that, had we seen it in a painting by Jerome Bosch, we would have marvelled at it. He told me the story of how Schopenhauer, walking in a wood, found Nature pondering deeply, her head in her hands. He asked her what wonders she was preparing for the evolution of man? She replied that she was thinking how she could best perfect the muscle in the claws of a flea.

I then tried to describe to Fargue creatures far more like the monsters painted by Bosch than a giant flea—the most fantastic creatures I had seen, they were called rotifers. I had been privileged to see into the world of the unseen, when through a powerful microscope, a single drop of pond water magnified one million times, revealed minute beings of extraordinarily complex shape and fantastic details—enormous heads, ruby eyes, manes of feathery silk, ears resembling a human hand with outstretched fingers. The rotifers were completely transparent. Here Fargue laughed and said, 'they need no X-rays when they are ill'. 'Not only are they transparent,' I replied, 'but they build out of themselves by secreting round, amber-coloured bricks, crystal houses, glass towers, forming a complicated lacework of transparent tubular buildings.'

There was no more question of the country or the waiting hostess in her château, it was already twelve o'clock, we would lunch together at the Restaurant Vincent where special dishes were always cooked for Fargue. Then he would take me to a friend of his who possessed a powerful microscope, with whom we would spend the rest of the day marvelling at the worlds that could be seen in one drop of water. All this we did, and when



evening descended, like a veil over the town, we went towards those places where the lights glisten like fire-flies, and the names of restaurants and bars were wriggling in the darkness like spangled snakes.

This time I had participated in Fargue's legendary lateness or non-appearance, but there were other times when I, too, suffered. I remember once asking him to dinner at eight, he arrived at seven. I foolishly teased him about being early and told him we had not yet started to cook. He said that as he was early he would go to the *Tabac* next door and buy some *Black Cat* cigarettes. He went, but did not return.

I was present at a dinner at which Fargue arrived as usual, about two hours late, and this time he was greeted with silence as he gaily entered the dining room and occupied his empty chair. The table was very long and very large; it was not a small intimate dinner party, but the Duchesse de La Rochefoucauld's yearly *Dîner des Savants*. Everyone present, but myself, was a savant. White-bearded professors, physicists such as the Duc de Broglie; even the author of the *Golden Bough* was there. We had reached the sweet, but the usual *rechauffé* dish Fargue expected, was not placed before him, not a word of greeting was addressed to him; at last he was to be taught a lesson. He did not notice the frigid silence: he did not care in the least. And, of course, conversation was resumed.

★                      ★                      ★

Fargue died a year ago. Paris is not the same without him, the Cafés are not the same, the Salons seem lifeless. We are not gay in the same way as we were, not sad in the same way as we were. We can live again in his atmosphere through his *Poèmes*, but it is the man who made them we lack, the man who was even more to poetry than the printed word.

'Partout où je cherchais à surprendre la vie  
 Dans le signe d'intelligence du mystère  
 j'ai cherché, j'ai cherché l'Introuvable ...' (*Poèmes*)

## LA GARE

Gare de la douleur, j'ai fait toutes tes routes.  
 Je ne peux plus aller, je ne peux plus partir.  
 J'ai trainé sous tes ciels, j'ai crié sous tes voûtes.

Je me tends vers le jour, où j'en verrai sortir  
 Le masque sans regard qui roule à ma rencontre  
 Sur le crassier livide où je rampe vers lui,  
 Quand le convoi des jours qui brûle ses décombres  
 Crachera son repas d'ombres pour autres ombres  
 Dans l'étable de fer où rumine la nuit.

LÉON-PAUL FARGUE

# POSTFACE

From: *Sous la Lampe*

Un long bras timbre d'or glisse du haut des arbres  
 Et commence à descendre et tinte dans les branches.  
 Les fleurs et les feuilles se pressent et s'entendent.  
 J'ai vu l'orvet glisser dans la douceur du soir.  
 Diane sur l'étang se penche et met son masque.  
 Un soulier de satin court dans la clairière  
 Comme un rappel du ciel qui rejoint l'horizon.  
 Les barques de la nuit sont prêtes à partir.  
 D'autres viendront s'asseoir sur la chaise de fer.  
 D'autres verront cela quand je ne serai plus.

La lumière oubliera ceux qui l'ont tant aimé.  
 Nul appel ne viendra rallumer nos visages.  
 Nul sanglot ne viendra retentir notre amour.  
 Nos fenêtres seront éteintes.  
 Un couple d'étrangers longera la rue grise.  
 Les voix  
 D'autres voix chanteront, d'autres yeux pleureront  
 Dans une maison neuve.  
 Tout sera consommé, tout sera pardonné,  
 La peine sera fraîche et la force nouvelle,  
 Et peut-être qu'un jour, pour des nouveaux amis,  
 Dieu tiendra ce bonheur qu'il nous avait promis

Les mots, les mots spéciaux qu'elle avait faits pour moi,  
 je l'écoutais les dire à l'Autre.  
 J'entends sonner son sabre sur les bois du lit.  
 j'entendrais toutes les paroles.  
 Quand il l'embrasse sur les yeux, là, tout au bord de l'île où  
 s'allume une lampe, il sent ses paupières battre sous sa bouche  
 comme la tête d'un oiseau qu'on a pris et qui a peur.

Il s'attarde au réseau des vaisseaux délicats comme l'ombre légère  
d'une plante marine.

Il caresse de tout son corps les seins qu'envenime l'amour.

(The words, the special words which she had found for me, I hear her say them  
to the Other

I hear his sword ring on the wood of the bed. I will hear all that is said.

When he kisses her on the eyes, there, at the edge of the island in which a lamp  
lights up, he feels her eyelids beat under his mouth like the head of a bird  
which has been caught and is afraid . . .

He lingers at the network of delicate veins like the light shadow of an ocean  
plant . . .

He caresses with all his body the breasts which love envenoms . . .

Une voix chante . . . Et dans le même arbre, la même étoile nous  
fait signe. Elle tremble comme un regard que des travaux de la  
nuit fatiguent. Elle semble toujours coudre, d'un air secret, dans  
l'étoffe sombre.

Regarde! Le poème des ages s'amuse et sonne et se presse par  
toutes les mains des legendes . . . Mais l'âme des soirs de jadis  
a gardé son côté intime et comme sur la cour . . . On entend  
souffler dans leurs clefs toutes les bêtes de la terre nocturne. Un  
crapaud râle sous une grosse feuille, d'une crécelle sourde et grave.  
Un insecte lime à son établi. Tout n'est que douceur lancinante . . .

O jardin de jadis, veilleuse parfumée . . .

(A voice is singing. And in the same tree, the same star beckons to us. It wavers  
like a glance of eyes tired by night-work. It seems to be always sewing, with a  
secret air, in the dark tissue . . .

Look! The poem of the ages sports and rings, pressed by all the hands of  
legend . . . But the soul of the past evenings has kept its secret aspects, as on an  
inner court. All the beasts of the nocturnal earth are heard calling in their varied  
keys. The toad croaks under a large leaf, with a dull and solemn rattle. An  
insect files at its bench. Everywhere aching sweetness.

O garden of the past, fragrant night-light . . . )

[Translation by W. SMART]

## POÈMES, suivi de POUR LA MUSIQUE

Les festins qui sonnaient aux terrasses du soir attendent ce que  
les gestes fatals vont écrire. Il se fait au ciel de grands signes  
d'écume . . .

Un château s'étagé. Une forme inquiète ouvre une porte au  
bord de la nuit qui s'égoutte. Elle regarde en face un regret de  
lumière isolée et douce. Elle vient se taire et voir au large . . .

L'heure tourne et sonne au buffet des songes . . .

Elle baisse au loin ses longs cils qui tintent . . . Les bêtes des nuits jouent à lui répondre, à petites voix blanches et minces. Elle donne à danser aux insectes du lac. Les lucioles font leur ronde aux sons de sa boîte à musique. On croirait qu'un oiseau en joue avec ses griffes. On dirait l'esprit de la pluie qui pleure . . .

Toute une ville naine veille et tremble à ras de terre, entre les hautes herbes. J'attends ses enclumes . . . Les mouches de la Saint Jean brûlent d'un feu boudeur, traînent sous le couvert et partent pour l'amour . . .

(The feasts which were resounding on the terraces of the evening pause for what the fatal gestures are going to inscribe. In the sky great signs of foam are forming . . .

A castle rises tier on tier. An unquiet figure opens a door at the edge of the dripping night and looks across at a faint light, solitary and soft. It has come for silence and to look out into space . . .

The Hour goes round and strikes at the buffet of dreams . . . It lowers afar its long lashes which tingle . . . The beasts of the night play at answering it, with little voices, flat and thin. It sets dancing the insects of the lake. The fire-flies go their round to the sounds of its music-box. It is as though a bird, with its claws, is playing with them . . . You would say it is the spirit of rain which is weeping . . .

A whole dwarf town keep vigil and trembles on the edge of the earth, among the high grasses. I hear its anvils. The midsummer night flies burn with a sulky fire, trail under cover and set out for love . . .)

[Translated by W. A. SMART]

## KATHLEEN NOTT

### THE TOPOGRAPHICAL ILLUSION

*A note on Dr. Glover's article on 'Freud  
and Jung' in HORIZON, October 1948*

'Although the psychologist is not concerned with the location of mind, he finds himself compelled to postulate, for purposes of presentation, a certain degree of mental organization which can be conveniently referred to as a mental *structure*. To begin then with the *structure of mind*, it may be noted that this concept was an inevitable consequence of Freud's discovery of unconscious "content". For if it can be demonstrated that ideas and potential effects exist apart from consciousness, yet can be made conscious by the use of a technique which overcomes certain "resistances", it is legitimate to postulate an unconscious system of the mind (ucs.)'

In other words, if you have discovered some furniture, you must put it in a basement, if you can discover a basement. These quotations, taken from Edward Glover's essay on 'Freud and Jung' reveal distinctly and aptly the need for more

and better philosophical criticism of all psychological systems which posit 'an' unconscious, Freud's not least. To say this is to risk the stock Freudian accusation of mere resistance to the Freudian unconscious 'content'. The risk must be accepted, otherwise there is no future for any kind of philosophical criticism or, in the end, I am afraid, for any criticism of any other kind. (Even the word 'deviation', freely used by Dr. Glover, has an odd ring in post-Marxian ears.)

A topographical illusion about the nature of mind has infected the language of Freud and his followers, and of Jung also and all psychologists of 'the' unconscious. The illusion inherits from a philosophical tradition, Realism in its various forms and under its various names, which has really ceased to bring home the bacon; for one important reason, because of this very hypostasis and multiplication of entities of which the illusion is an example.

The idea of unconscious processes was not a new one discovered by Freud. Freud discovered the topographical unconscious, and this concept is not only misleading—leading away, that is, from any scientific or observational progress in psychology—but its developments have also obscured the real evaluation of Freud's work. Both his reputation and his contribution suffer needlessly.

For example, in every individual patient, the Freudian analyst does 'discover' an unconscious—'it can be made conscious by the use of a technique which overcomes certain resistances' but 'there is a point in the investigation of infantile mental processes before which it is impossible to check theories by direct scientific examination of the material' (p. 244, Glover's essay). To say that the analyst does thus 'discover' an unconscious, is not, of course, to say that the 'content' has no reality, though in fact the dangers of suggestion are real, and increase with the spread of psychological 'literacy'. But the natural temptation among non-Freudians and 'deviationists' to say that the analyst 'discovers' the patient's 'unconscious', because he put it there in the first place, is so very strong and influential that it would surely be better to concentrate on what we *can* observe and also on a contribution made by Freud which is of unquestioned value.

We do then observe that the human mind has memory and also a capacity for forgetting which in certain cases appears more functional than negative. At the lowest level of common-sense observation, we can all see by now that human beings often forget because they want to. I should say then that the point from which we ought to start admiring and being grateful to Freud, is the discovery of the phenomenon of Repression, with many of its mechanisms, and I suggest that in any given analysis which seems to be yielding results, what is important is not the quality of what is discovered, but the fact that due to the release of repression (with the assistance of the analyst, a highly experienced person with whom alone the patient acquires complete confidence) the *act* of discovering becomes possible. This act of discovering is a special form of direction of attention or consciousness, where it could not be directed before, because repression is a form of forgetting which is charged, for historical and social reasons, with high emotion. This emphasis on the acts of repression and discovery does not mean that what is discovered is unimportant. Obviously, for social reasons, some material is far more likely to be repressed than other material, for example sexuality and aggression, but what makes the patient *ill*

is the trick of repression, the tremendous false strain on his attention which may turn itself so far away from its real interest that hysterical or over-compensatory symptoms may result. Fundamentally, it is not really a question of any 'content' being forcibly fished out of the basement or indeed of any dynamic primitive drives being at long last *allowed* to come up into the parlour. I suggest that if we want to understand, and to use, this most valuable concept of Freud's, that of repression, we must concentrate more on consciousness, on the conscious ego, or self, a name which is preferable on historical and genetic grounds: on those mental processes, in short, which are accessible to observation.

The word 'self' is to be preferred, as long as we do not hypostatize it—a proviso which applies to all the rest of the terminology, whether it was introduced by Freud or has been substituted since—because it suggests something acquired from other selves. The infant is, with decreasing vagueness, aware of other people before it is aware of itself, the Cartesian ego being as it were the latest possible development of the dependent stage. The ego or self then may be conceived as one out of many acts of attention or consciousness. In this narrowest Cartesian sense, the self is an apprehension of itself, but of course this is merely definitive and conceptual, and this Cartesian sense is not at all useful for the real understanding of any individual's psychology or of the historical way in which any self is acquired. The self is learned from other selves. This seems to give us a more likely line than Freud's topographical view on, for instance, why some people go insane and others do not. For example, is it not the case that it is less the strength of instinctual drives, less an enormous irruption of the unconscious 'content' too powerful to be restrained, which is responsible for most insanity, than a lack of balanced development, a relative weakness of the self and its harmonizing and critical powers, which is due to the fact that the self has been badly learned from others? If others have been too stupid, too frustrating or too uninteresting in early childhood, there is a greater chance that a full and complete self-development will not have occurred, that temporary or permanent difficulty in making those acts of awareness and reflexive criticism which constitute a self, may result.

That the self does really develop through awareness and imitation of the selves of others is not only borne out by observation (people from infancy upwards can be seen trying on selves and sometimes continuing to wear obvious misfits) but there seem to be many analogies in the development of other human functions: for example, in language, which in the early synthetic stage includes the person in a single act with the verb, and in the later analytic stages dissolves this fusion; and also in primitive social groups whose members, if we can believe Malinowski and others, are often more aware of the group than of their own individualities.

Freud (and Glover) refer to the 'Dynamic Unconscious' but one of the objections to Freud's theory is that his unconscious, as a concept, is very static. It is not really at all the case that the Freudian ego has to withstand the onslaughts of a striving Id (let alone the constant intake from external reality). On the contrary, the unconscious ego and the super-ego, plus, in certain cases, the analytical technique, have been imported by Freud, like so many cranes and derricks, to make it theoretically possible to shift the 'content' upstairs. Freud does say that repression is an ego function but even to use this language is to

perpetuate the topographical illusion. In fact, to use any of his classificatory terms, without redefinition, is to posit the whole structure. The implications of all of them result from Freud's own need to account for this constructed receptacle, the unconscious, which was never more real than any other working hypothesis, but which Freud and his successors have hypostatized.

There is no question of arguing with his major descriptive and dynamic concepts—infantile sexuality, repression, the complex, the meaning of symbols and so on, since they refer to the observable. But apart from the obvious structural concepts I have mentioned, there are others which have only a structural necessity, though this may be obscured. Infantile amnesia is one of these concepts. It is only after we have invented some premises with valuable or forbidden contents, that we need to invent a door and then shut it, till the analyst turns up twenty years later with the keys. The truth is that the only introspective psychological knowledge which is verifiable is of what comes into the mind from conscious experience, or of what has once been conscious. We need to start with the conscious mind and its acts of attention. The self, in its minimal or Cartesian sense, may be, as I have said, one of these acts of attention, theoretically so at least. In practice the minimal definition of self is just that which is not others, it is never a mere thinking of 'I', and as we experience it in time, it is always an awareness of activities, events and objects. The self being thus always a shifting, fluctuating and changing reaction to internal and external events, always temporal and active while it can be said to exist at all, there is no need to increase the danger of hypostasis—always present if we think of even this concept as more than a mere denotation—by splitting it further into the Freudian fragments.

My point is that we need to substitute for the topographical Freudian unconscious a dynamic and unified concept of mental process, a concept of what the conscious mental processes can or cannot summon from total memory at will and of why they can or cannot do so. By accepting this historical account of a self which is learned experientially and which later becomes able to select its experience, either to its own advantage or its own disadvantage, we can avoid the unending Jungian path into myth and mysticism. And we can also avoid some of the Freudian extrapolations into pre-history which are not much more verifiable. We also do not need to worry so much (in a theoretical sense, I mean) about the earliest infantile stages, inaccessible to inspection, as Glover, speaking for Freud, admits. If consciousness, with its capacity for developing a self, grows by the experiencing of others, all that happens in the period inaccessible to inspection, can only be correctly understood and treated on the biological or behaviouristic level. Pavlov induced neuroses in animals—by doing the wrong things to them. The point is that he did the wrong things, he did not say the wrong things or preach at them beyond their understandings. All language was beyond their understandings and therefore beyond their slightest concern. Human neurosis, as far as we have any real objective observation of it—this includes the kind of observation of it obtained by analyst and patient in 'deep' analysis, is caused by conceptions in the patient's mind, conceptions which may or may not correspond to reality, about the behaviour of other people. Very often we can find sufficient account of this behaviour at the verbal or 'self' level—in analysis, speech is a *sine qua non*. But it is probably more



fruitful to take a Pavlovian view of the stage which precedes conscious development of a 'self' learned from the experiencing of others. In short, the future probably lies far more with the education of society than with the re-education of the individual, valuable though this may be.

To recapitulate, we need to start from Repression (always remembering that this also is a metaphor). Otherwise we come right up against the problem of 'content', and of course of the mechanisms for shifting it, and then against the metapsychological and metaphysical problem—How did the 'content' get there?

From this it is no distance to racial mythology. Glover has no real right to attack Jung on Freud's behalf. The Freudian concept of 'the' unconscious has itself begotten the Jungian, however little it is willing to recognize its bastard. To revert to extreme topographical metaphor, which is however not much more wildly far-fetched than the Freudian technical terminology in its applications, Freud has not only helped Jung find a basement, he has even helped him move in the furniture, for as Glover admits, Freud 'adduced the case of symbolism . . . in support . . . of the idea of an archaic heritage of ideational content' (while agreeing nevertheless 'that symbolism was capable of another explanation'). 'In the case of mass-psychology, however, he was definitely of the opinion that mental residues of primeval times need only be reawakened, not reacquired.' 'And he asserted that "the archaic heritage of mankind includes not only archaic dispositions but also ideational contents, memory traces of the experience of former generations".' Moreover 'Freud realized fully that the present attitude of biological science rejects the idea of acquired qualities being transmitted to descendants. *Nothing daunted by this opposition*, he maintained that he was unable to picture biological development without taking this into account.' In other words he refused to be put off a rounded and satisfying theory by the mere lack of any data to support it. The fact seems to be that the psychologist, exactly in the degree in which he is caught up in the topographical illusion, tends to underestimate the environmental and educational factors compared with the inherited. And as the illusion multiplies its entities in the attempt to give location to names, so we get more and more of an extrapolation into a mythical and crowded racial past. The more stress is laid on the 'innate' as opposed to the conditioned, the more 'things' seem to be 'there' to be accounted for. And incidentally the closer you get to a sort of 'black' theology. An inherited sense of guilt is not so readily distinguishable by the lay mind, at least in emotional tone, from Original Sin. Freud said religion was a neurosis, but in doing so almost made neurosis into a religion.

Finally, noting with regret the hardly suppressed bad temper of the Freudian non-deviationist, as he deals with his opponents, one suspects that he suffers, as an occupational disease, from a 'resistance' to the deviationist's 'resistance' to the unconscious and its 'content'.

## SELECTED NOTICES

*The Wrong Set.* By Angus Wilson. Secker & Warburg. 8s. 6d.

The satirist's is a bold role and not to be lightly adopted. He is beset by cunning enemies, and no writer needs so wary a perfection of equipment. If he falls he falls hard, never, perhaps, to rise again. For his readers are a vicious and unforgiving lot, and they will readily turn their malevolence from his victims to himself. He himself has stimulated their blood-lust, excited them to a baying frenzy, and he must never fail to deliver their victim neatly trussed and perforated. Perhaps we can most rewardingly compare him to a matador. Like the bull-fighter he must, in the first place, choose a worthy adversary. Retired colonels and bourgeois gentil hommes have become, in our own time, like scrawny or over-fed bulls whose despatch can excite only a bored indignation with their slayer. And even if the bull is fierce and formidable it will not do simply to attack him with a pole-axe. The rapier must be used, and must be used with superlative elegance.

Undoubtedly Mr. Angus Wilson has won his spurs in the bull-ring. His best encounters prove that a new star has risen on this depleted horizon, and the aficionados will certainly pay for their seats whenever he chooses to perform again. At times one is equally impressed by the formidable appearance of his bull and by the neatness with which he despatches it. *A Visit in Bad Taste* is a beautiful example of the toreador's art. Here we are presented with an almost admirable woman, sensibly liberal in her views, unsentimental, cultivated and sophisticated. But she is confronted by one of those testing situations which are like X-rays in their terrible penetrative powers. Her shady, vulgar and charmless brother has just been released after serving a prison sentence for indecent assault, and Margaret (a nicely chosen name) rids herself of this incubus with a cool reasonableness which is profoundly disgusting. There are other stories in this collection—*Crazy Crowd* and *Mother's Sense of Fun*, for example—in which Mr. Wilson exhibits the same adventurousness in his choice of victim, and the same graceful skill at the 'moment of truth'. He has to perfection that indispensable piece of equipment for the satirist, a sharp and retentive ear. Almost everywhere in this book the dialogue is evocative and devastating.

But Mr. Cockshott was growing restive, his face took on an expression of caricatured thoughtfulness and he bit on his pipe. "Of course, I might appear with no trousers at all," he said. "Aesthetically I should be perfectly justified, for I still have a very fine leg. Hygienically—well the weather is very warm and trousers are an undesirable encumbrance. Socially I make my own laws. I have only one hesitation and that is in the moral sphere. I have no doubt at all that the sight of my splendid limbs would cause Mrs. Brasher to become discontented with her own spouse's spindly shanks; and whilst I have the greatest contempt for that horsetoothed, henpecked gentleman, I have also the highest respect for the institution of marriage. No, I must remain a martyr to the cause of public morality." A chorus of laughter greeted this sally and Nan declared he was impossible, whilst Jenny dared him to carry out his threats. "Oh, do, Dads, do," she cried, "I'd so adore to see Mrs. Brasher's face . . ." All this is beautiful rapier work, and by the end of the story this facetious, whimsical,

false and deeply repulsive family lie neatly disembowelled around the ring. And when occasion requires it, Mr. Wilson can be most economically witty: "Is that one of Brock's nightly prowls?" asked Edwin. "No, darling," replied Monica, "not Brock and not nightly prowls. Just badgers drinking."

Yet Mr. Wilson is by no means uniformly successful and there are occasions when he does very badly indeed. His great fault is that he is far too careless as a writer. For example *Fresh Air Fiend*, an admirable story in so many ways, is very nearly ruined by its anecdotal ending. Here a last sentence hammers home the point of the story with a crashing thud: the pole-axe is suddenly brought out when the rapier should have already done its work. Mr. Wilson often seems so eager to come to grips with his adversary that he forgets to bother with his medium. A severe technical problem in writing a short story is to provide the necessary preliminary information with surreptitious tact. Mr. Wilson has no notion how to do this. In his long story, *Union Reunion*, he is faced with the necessity of explaining a number of complex family events and relationships which properly precede the theme of the story. His desperately crude method is to allow the characters to indulge in explanatory interior dialogues. 'Her other sisters-in-law kissed her and squeezed her arm and gave her confidences and she did not shrink back, but with Minnie it always seemed so false. Of course they had all felt that Minnie had tricked Bert into the marriage and Bert had been her favourite brother, but then it was all so long ago now, and Bert was dead.' Anything would be better than this clumsy sleight-of-hand, even a foreword in which the previous events and the present relationships were baldly summarized.

A similar error of discretion can be seen in Mr. Wilson's improvident use of proper names. No task should be more distasteful to the novelist or story-writer than the invention of names, for nothing so harshly emphasizes the clumsiness of his medium. Yet Mr. Wilson will happily throw in extra names at the very end of a story when they could have been avoided without any strain at all.

'Lois was doing her hair and Marjorie was in the bath when the telephone rang. They were dining in Soho with the Travises, but they had promised to look in at Mavis Wayne's party before dinner.'

The Travises and Mavis Wayne are a deplorable mistake, for their introduction makes an unnecessary and unsuccessful claim on our credulity. Presumably the intention is to convince us that the world of this short story is three-dimensional, peopled by a whole diverse community of characters who may or may not be mentioned. But the effect of these names is simply to tumble the whole tight little story into a sort of diffuse bathos.

It seemed important to insist on these weaknesses in Mr. Wilson's technical equipment. They can lead him at times into total errors. *Significant Experience* is a pointless little piece of false sophistication and the murder of the bull-finch at the end of *Raspberry Jam* is a gross and odious error of taste. There are also occasions when Mr. Wilson's bull smells as if it might have been killed many years ago. Yet the satirical talent of this writer is beyond all question. He must look carefully to his technical equipment and never allow himself to publish a story of which he has any doubts at all. In this field nothing but perfection will do, and Mr. Wilson has shown that he can achieve it.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

- The Voyage of Magellan.* By Laurie Lee. John Lehmann. 10s. 6d.  
*Selected Poems.* By John Crowe Ransom. Eyre & Spottiswoode. 9s. 6d.  
*Poems 1920-45.* By Allen Tate. Eyre & Spottiswoode. 10s. 6d.  
*The Dispossessed.* By John Berryman. Wm. Sloane. Assoc. Inc. \$2.50.  
*The King of Asine.* By George Seferis. John Lehmann. 10s. 6d.  
*The Age of Anxiety.* By W. H. Auden. Faber & Faber. 8s. 6d.

'Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry and will be induced to enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts may be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers for their own sakes should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that while they are perusing this book they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision.'

The preface to the original edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, written 150 years ago, is not so well known as the prefaces to the 1800 and 1802 editions in which Wordsworth explored the sources of poetical inspiration. Catch-phrases taken from their context in these prefaces are well-known and imprint half-truths upon the mind, often the opposite of Wordsworth's intention. Let us look at another passage, from the 1802 preface:

'For a multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.'

As the mind, now, sinks into that savage state, so the pre-established codes of decision take firmer hold. In his essay upon *Tradition and the individual talent* Mr. T. S. Eliot added another dangerous catch-phrase 'significant emotion'. Let us look at the before and after:

'There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is an expression of *significant* emotion, which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet.'

You will remember the main thesis on the depersonalization of the artist; which has turned out to be a detrimental doctrine, since it has allowed the heresy that the literary experience of emotion is enough; that the reading and vocabulary of erotic books may substitute for the real experience of love, in the poet's history.

'Poetry is not the turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.'

Such an attitude, typified in the use of the word escape, is the negation of the Wordsworthian. Wordsworth saw the necessity to refresh poetry by relating it more deeply, directly, and simply to human passions, human characters, human incidents, seeing 'how far the language of the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure'. He saw that the communication of poetry to a public becoming inhuman cogs in the city machine was profoundly difficult and important. And in the society he saw beginning, a society now at the height of its savagery, he saw the difficulty of the poet maintaining himself poetically: that is, having time for meditation and contemplation of experience. Escape postulates fear or danger or distaste—a weakness in Mr. Eliot's Poetic which is evidenced in his poetry. Wordsworth wished to explore unafraid the human personality and emotions, and to use them to the full in love, not in fear: constantly therefore to enlarge his power of experience, and his power of commonly communicating that experience. The significant emotions of Shakespeare consist in his having been able to write down poetically every sort and grade of human experience—a supreme natural delineation: (the history of the poet).

The difference between Wordsworth and Eliot is, simply, this. Wordsworth was able by the power of his whole genius to refresh and renew the emotions of poetry, Eliot was able only to renew the vocabulary, to re-create a language in which emotion might be expressed. But like so much else in the experience of society when the discriminating powers of the mind have gone, the word has been divorced from the deed. Even Yeats, who saw the danger instinctively, succeeded only by an act of will possible to one of his self-dramatizing temperament in making the emotion real and vital in his later poetry.

The words 'emotion,' 'feeling,' are not in Wordsworth divorced from thought. The two are bound together to make what might be called a romantic precision. Romantic precision has again been lost from poetry, though there is a lot of imprecision about. Nor is precision to be confused with the photographic catalogues of the Grigsonian Institute. Precision is the discipline of thought upon imagination, itself moved by powerful feelings far from imprecise. Death is precise enough, yet is powerful to infinity.

Wordsworth made as the only final distinction between the technique of prose and poetry the *metre*; or as we would say now, the rhythm. The originality and vitality of his rhythm is a great mark of a poet. Technical excellence is a secondary though necessary quality: for the basic original rhythm is refined by skill, but no amount of technique can hide lack of rhythmical power. Rhythms of speech change from generation to generation:

'A form of speech has been sought that would be simple, concentrated, intelligible yet heightened towards poetry. . . .'

writes Laurie Lee in his preface to *The Voyage of Magellan*. 'Heightened towards poetry' seems a curious and imprecise phrase. Does one 'lower towards prose?' On the dust-jacket of this book is the remark 'radio drama of today is a medium which offers opportunities to an imaginative poet' . . . what is an *unimaginative* poet? That Laurie Lee is not a dramatic poet the *Voyage of Magellan* proves. The piece—a narrative heightened towards poetry?—has none of the imaginative and rhythmical impulse from which his lyrics spring. Magellan was never part of this poet's history; but the piece was commissioned, and for

a commissioned work is commendable enough. But to say that it is a play is surely overrating our savage torpor. The conflict of Magellan with the mutineers is never developed, the mutiny itself glossed over, the death of Magellan almost ignored (and much else, such as the homecoming of survivors)—and in favour of a great deal of bell-clanging religious observances and a great deal of dull dialogue between unimportant sailors. The construction of the piece is poorly and its language as flat as Holland. The drawings by Edward Burra seem also commissioned rather than inspired. How does it come about that two such original and gifted artists could have produced such a dull conventional work? Does it not come from that savage torpor of pre-established codes of decision, the code in this case being that most elementary and superficial one: A is good. Therefore everything A does is good. If you say it is no good the more fool you.

The rhythms of American speech are different from English, a fact we too often forget. American is another tongue. In the best American poetry this difference is at once apparent. It seems incredible that the English public is not conversant with the poetry of Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom, yet these are their first English editions. Both poets are concerned with human passions, characters, incidents, more directly than is fashionable now, and in the Wordsworthian sense that 'the reader will find no personifications of abstract ideas in these volumes. . . but that in these poems I propose to imitate and as far as possible adopt the very language of men, and I do not find that such personifications make any regular or natural part of that language. I wish to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him.'

Both Tate and Ransom use positive language, compact, concentrated, but having that refined vulgarity of rhythm that has its base in living speech, but its apex in the particular style of the poet. How far that language has already waned into gaudiness and inane phraseology can be seen in the work of a younger American poet John Berryman.

His poems have appeared in the best intellectual American magazines, whose standards for poetical achievement may therefore be assumed to be in accord with them. We discover then, that the language of a Tate (or a Hart Crane) has given place to the dull clever lingo of the good university don; that the vitality of rhythm has become debased to a boring secondhand drone—the rhythm indeed of words that have become detached from experience. The content of the poetry, then?

Content in poetry has been almost the only criterion of judgement for some time. The desire for the prophetic or pseudo-prophetic holds the mid-twentieth as it held the mid-nineteenth-century critic: and a general kind of obscurity suits best the superficially oracular as it also suits best any literary period dominated by homosexual taste which causes the expression of the emotions to be obscure, or symbolic, or dishonest. Such taste prefers a precocious adolescent kind of literature and criticism—it is a taste which has perforce certain gaps in experience, violent prejudices, and whose critical judgements are formed for other than literary reasons. Mr. Berryman seems to have been content to read his period and write *its* poetry and not his own. An imperfect understanding perhaps of Mr. Eliot's idea of the depersonalized artist has confined him happily



to the study. Of course, how a poet spends his time is irrelevant: but that he should spend it and not save it certainly is relevant to the poetry he produces. These poems have an air of having been self-commissioned.

Compare Mr. Berryman with Mr. Seferis. Here, since these are translations, we have to rely upon the content of the poetry. Their sound, their rhythm, their idiom are lost to us. The rhythms of Greek are not the rhythms of literary English or American. Yet even with these insuperable disadvantages Seferis stands as a poet, and as a poet of an adult literature.

These notes lead to a consideration of W. H. Auden's long poem *The Age of Anxiety* which is written in a language somewhere between English and American or translation. It is Mr. Auden's first American production and for an English critic there are certain obvious sources of irritation which must be overcome before the work can be judged objectively. The first thing to surprise, even to alarm, is that the piece is persistently boring. It is hard to believe that Mr. Auden could be boring, but so it is. The poem is described as a *baroque eclogue* so that one may expect a grotesque extravagant and artificial affair, and this is set in the opposite of pastoral circumstances—a New York bar, in wartime, on All Souls night. But soon it is apparent that the naturalistic setting does not signify at all, and that All Souls is a euphemism for All Psychologists. So we are left with four *idola* or 'personifications of abstract ideas'—by no standards can they be called characters—getting drunk in a baroque. It is clear from this poem that Christopher Isherwood supplied the dramatic element in the late collaboration, for these four circumambulate only in the poet's mind: their artificial dialogue never reaches a real interplay of thought, but only a loose nexus of ideas. Though they are given four names and two and a half sexes there is no tension between them. Sex does not apply.

The poem must therefore stand by its rhythmic impulse and its language. Mr. Auden has chosen for the artifice of the eclogue to use a loose alliterative line, lumpy as school porridge, and rhythms which bump and thud like a poltergeist—out of which occasional pieces of coal, and teacups, so to speak, describe their queer inhuman parabolas. The poem is carefully, painstakingly written, but it has an air of strain alien to its convention and the insistent hammering of the consonants has a sad undertaking sound.

Then, what has the poem to say? It is unthinkable that Mr. Auden could have sat down to this long work without a genuine purpose. Three men and a woman get slowly drunk in a bar, they talk, their personalities merge, they go back to the woman's flat, the two elder men leave, the younger passes out on the woman's bed and cannot sleep with her, as she had hoped. The purpose is to show what is going on in four separate minds. But what does go on is a rehash of Auden's psychology divided by four, and multiplied by a great many of his older clichés. Even for what they are these *idola* have little validity—they are impure superficial conceptions.

The poem is indeed as academic a performance as any of Mr. Berryman's. It is unfair perhaps to cite the poet himself, but to have heard him read an extract from this poem recently was illuminating. The accent—save for short 'a' sounds, as in fast—was still English, but the determination was to be American. So in the poem the local allusions stick out like porcupine's quills from a tiger's paw. The setting, the putting of Emble and Malin into uniform, the fact that



Rosetta recalls an England that has only existed as a silly literary convention (a Mrs. Miniver England), that Quant has child-dreams of Ireland all testify to the poet's embarrassment; and calling the piece a *baroque eclogue* only the more exposes it. We know too much of Auden's history as a man: what is distressing about this poem is the very attempt of the poet to project his privacies into it. Purely as a work of art it seems utterly remote from living experience; quite emotionless; full of carefully written words and carefully contrived ideas, but all *in vacuo*—and it is difficult not to conceive that this vacuum has been created by the poet's life. When he really has become American, inside as well as out, in diction, in rhythm, in feeling, in thought (as Mr. Eliot has become English) surely he will again produce living work?

It is reasonable to end this notice by remarking that at present few people can be found with minds discriminating enough to buy books of contemporary poetry—nor are the prices at which publishers issue them enticing. The savage torpor is almost universal, and the introduction of two admirable American poets, who will indeed interest the reader, is not likely to be a resounding success.

'An accurate taste in poetry . . . is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought and a long intercourse with the best models.'

Who is left to make that voluntary effort?

PATRIC DICKINSON

A BRIEF examination of many MSS shows that the authors were not clear at the outset if they were writing for monetary reward or not. Or, in brief, whether anyone would be likely to buy them. In spite of anything heard to the contrary a little market research is necessary before actually writing. The maker of an author's typewriter is careful to see that it conforms to reasonable requirements. If monetary reward is not a consideration, however, the author can claim to be a person of some distinction.

Telephone: Flaxman 4866

E. P. S. LEWIN,  
*Literary Agent,*  
7 Chelsea Embankment,  
London, S.W.3

## THE CRISIS OF THE HUMAN PERSON

*J. B. Coates*

A clear and stimulating exposition of the philosophy of Personalism. It embraces studies of the following thinkers of our time, who, in the author's view, affirm or deny the personalist position:

NICOLAS BERDYAEV

LEWIS MUMFORD

ARTHUR KOESTLER

JAMES BURNHAM

J. MIDDLETON MURRY

C. S. LEWIS

MARTIN BUBER

HAROLD LASKI

HERBERT READ

ALDOUS HUXLEY

KARL MANNHEIM

GERALD HEARD

WILLIAM REICH

12s. 6d. net

LONGMANS

# FICTION IN 1949

## THE DIARY OF ANTOINE ROQUENTIN

Jean-Paul Sartre

First published in Paris in 1938 as *La Nausée*, this is Sartre's first novel and his earliest full-length essay in the philosophy for which he is now famous. RECOMMENDED BY THE BOOK SOCIETY.

2nd Impression. 9s. 6d.

## THE CITY AND THE PILLAR

Gore Vidal

'Serious, discerning, and obviously courageous. One goes back to Gide or Proust for anything comparable.' *Library Journal* (U.S.A.). (Ready) 10s. 6d.

## DARK AVENUES

Ivan Bunin

A new collection of stories by the famous Russian *émigré* writer and Nobel Prize winner, author of *The Well of Days*. RECOMMENDED BY THE BOOK SOCIETY.

(Ready) 9s. 6d.

## THE GRAND DESIGN

John Dos Passos

The long-awaited novel by the author of *U.S.A.* and *Three Soldiers*. The scene: Washington. The time: New Deal.

(June) 10s. 6d.

## MARIAM

Ennio Flaiano

An exciting novel by a new Italian author, set in Abyssinia during Mussolini's campaign.

(Autumn) 9s. 6d.

## THE DARK PENINSULA

Ernest Frost

A first novel by a young author (and *Horizon* contributor) with unusual gifts of style, psychological perception and story-telling. (Autumn) 9s. 6d.

## THE WORLD IS A WEDDING

Delmore Schwartz

An outstanding collection of stories by a young American author, many of which have appeared in *Partisan Review*.

(Autumn) 9s. 6d.

## I SAW IN MY DREAM

Frank Sargeson

Frank Sargeson is already known for his collection of stories, *That Summer*, and in this novel his art attains a new scope and richness. (Autumn) 10s. 6d.

## THE SHELTERING SKY

Paul Bowles

Discerning readers will already have spotted Paul Bowles's short stories for their rare promise. This is his first novel, a work of brilliant wit and macabre power.

(Autumn) 10s. 6d.

JOHN LEHMANN



## EVEN READING HAS BECOME A SUBSTITUTE FOR READING . . .

**I** SAW that the novel, which was the strongest and  
supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion,  
was becoming subordinated to a mechanical and com-  
munal art that, in the hands of Hollywood merchants,  
was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the  
most obvious emotion. An art in which words were  
subordinated to images, where personality was worn  
down to the inevitable low gear of collaboration . . .  
There was a rankling indignity, that to me had become  
almost an obsession, in seeing the power of the written  
word subordinated to another power, a more glittering,  
a grosser power . . .

**THESE** are not the words of a bohemian theorist, but of a brilliant  
and typically American career, F. Scott Fitzgerald, speaking of his  
own experience in Hollywood. Fitzgerald saw the beginning of a  
social process that has spread far beyond Hollywood.

**THE** Day of the Masses has arrived in culture. The blaring power  
of the mass media—cinema, radio, television—displaces and absorbs  
literature. What used to be the art of literature has become too subtle,  
difficult, and remote for popular taste.

**EVEN** reading has become a substitute for reading.

**TO** keep the power of the written word alive, to promote fresh and  
independent currents of thought; in sum, to give the reader some-  
thing to *read*—these are jobs which more than ever the editors of  
**PARTISAN REVIEW** find worth doing.

**PARTISAN REVIEW**, America's leading literary monthly, invites  
you to join its growing circle of readers.

English readers who have been unable to enter or renew their subscriptions because  
of currency restrictions may now subscribe to **PARTISAN REVIEW** by filling out  
the coupon below. Other readers may write to **PARTISAN REVIEW**, 1545 Broad-  
way, N.Y. 19, N.Y. Subscription rates: \$5 for one year, \$8 for two years.

Atlas Publishing Co. 18 Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London E.C.4

Please enter my subscription to **PARTISAN REVIEW** for:

☐ ONE YEAR £1 10s.

TWO YEARS £2 10s. ☐

Name.....

Street.....

City..... Country.....

---

DESMOND MacCARTHY

RAYMOND MORTIMER

RALPH STRAUS

JOHN RUSSELL

are among the distinguished contributors  
to the literary pages of

# The Sunday Times

*Music by*



*Drama by*

ERNEST NEWMAN

HAROLD HOBSON



*Films by*

*Art by*

DILYS POWELL

ERIC NEWTON



and the best-informed news pages in  
Sunday journalism, with authoritative  
articles on topics of the day